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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

No. 1265

NEW YORK:
THE LEONARD SCOTT PUBLICATION CO.,
RAMA PERREE, PROP.
249 WEST 13TH STREET.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

Entered as second-class matter, July 3, 1917, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879

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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

No. MCCLXV. MARCH 1921. Vol. CCIX.

A STUDY IN GREEN.

BY SALTIRE.

VI. FANELESS.

I.

Faneless is a small town in the West of Ireland. Until a few months ago it enjoyed the blessings of peace combined with obscurity. Now it is almost as famous as Lourdes, though posterity must be left to decide whether its fame is fully merited or merely fictitious.

Faneless possessed from very ancient times two features of which its inhabitants were justly proud, although these did not enjoy any exceptional degree of renown save in its immediate vicinity. The first of them was its church. It was of great antiquity; and though a part of it had been destroyed by fire in the troublous times of the seventeenth century, more than half had remained almost intact, and during the period of comparative tranquillity which followed the Catholic Emancipation, it had not only been restored by the munificence of private donors, but also considerably enlarged and beautified.

Amongst the many treasures that were collected from various parts of the country and reestablished in the place, whence they were believed to have been removed by the faithful and devoted adherents of the ancient Church into places of safety, or in a few rare cases torn by impious hands to adorn museums and collections of curios, were a statue of Our Lady and others of some of those saints who at one time shed lustre on the Irish race, and to whom that country

owed the name by which it was known throughout the whole of civilised Europe.

But although these statues were revered by the parishioners of Faneless, and admired by lovers of art who came from long distances to see them, until a few months ago they were not generally famous.

And then there is the river: call it a stream if you will; for, after all, it is only a tributary flowing into a greater flood that bears its pure waters to the sea. But its ripples are clearer and more limpid than those of other streams: it rushes through the ancient town fresh from the mists and snows of the mountains; it dashes on its bright and brilliant way as if eager to perform its task of journeying to the ocean; at every twist and winding its youth is renewed as the eagle's that soared above the heights that it has left behind, and falls suddenly into the larger, calmer, darker, and more sluggish stream almost as if with regret that it had run its course so fast.

It is more than probable—it is even certain—that from time immemorial the waters of this stream possessed healing properties of exceptional value; but as Faneless was far away from the highroads and beaten tracks, no fashionable physician had ever discovered its virtues, and no crowds of wealthy invalids had conspired to disturb its primeval peace, or to exalt the sleepy township into a rival of Harrogate or Bath.

Such was the situation at the date when an unforeseen event raised Faneless to a pinnacle of fame, and produced the series of strange incidents which will hereafter be described.

Heretofore its inhabitants had been as little influenced by the feverish clamour of politics and the jarring clash of factions as they were undisturbed by the restless interests of the outer world. The peasantry respected and revered the neighbouring gentry, whose associations with the lands of their ancestors were so ancient that even in this country of long memories all trace of their origin was lost in the mists of the past. As friendly an understanding as could be desired obtained between all classes of the community, while Catholic tenant and Protestant landlord lived side by side on terms of the surest goodwill.

Then one day, in the middle of the hottest month of the summer, town and neighbourhood were electrified by the news of a murder in their midst.

The murdered man was a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the indignation of the people was intensified by the fact that in his lifetime he had never held or paraded any violent political opinions, while in his dealings with them he had never been guilty of any injustice or severity.

The crime was accompanied by circumstances of unusual mystery. The constable's body

was found in an orchard in the very early hours of the summer morning by a cowman going to his work. A path ran through the orchard to the sheds where the cows were housed for the night; and the attention of the cowman, who was a sharp-eyed observant man and very intimately acquainted with the place, was drawn to something unusual that lay under an apple-tree almost hidden in the grass.

Approaching, he was startled on hearing a low groan and at the sight of a man lying there; but he could obtain no word from the sufferer, for it was clear that he was already unconscious. It followed that directly he ran for assistance and told his story, crowds of people gathered to the spot. The poor victim of the outrage was taken away to the hospital, where he died without having recovered consciousness. The grass was trampled down; every approach was trodden again and again by the impress of scores of feet, and all trace that there may have been of the assassin was almost entirely obliterated.

The nearest official centre to which information was sent and from which inquiry was instituted was some fifteen miles away, and when the authorities arrived at least twelve hours had already intervened since the time of the murder. Bloodhounds were brought on to the scene, but proved pitifully ineffective to achieve any useful purpose. They failed to get on to the scent of the criminal, and wasted much time in following false trails. One of them at last gave tongue, started off at great speed, and aroused the highest hopes in the breasts of his trainers, only to lead them with great celerity and skill to the hospital which had received the constable. The animal had been guided by scent not along the tracks of the criminal but of his victim. To add to their dismay, after they had been searching for an hour, the sullen clouds that had long brooded over this arena of tragedy burst suddenly, and floods of rain descended.

Some difficulty was caused, moreover, by the anxious impetuosity of the friends and relatives of the murdered man, who insisted at first on accompanying the agents of the law, and overwhelming them with counsel and advice, which, though intended with the utmost sincerity to help, only resulted in the creation of an additional hindrance.

A large measure of tact, combined with considerate firmness, succeeded ultimately in persuading the greater part of them to return to their homes. The widow alone could not be prevailed upon to leave them: she appeared unshakable in her resolution to persevere until the perpetrator of the deed should be unmasked, or at least until some evidence should be disclosed which would lead to his apprehension.

It would seem that every inhabitant of the place who could possibly throw any light on the mystery was carefully and fully interrogated. Had the murdered man made any enemies? Had he any rivals or ill-wishers? Was there anything against his reputation that could possibly provide a clue? No; he was everywhere well spoken of: his conduct had always been reasonable and never provocatory. The upshot of it all was that he must have been murdered by some one who did not belong to that part of the country, who was actuated by some sinister motive, who had been carefully hidden prior to the act, and who had escaped, without being seen by any one, under cover of the favouring night.

The investigators departed therefore in the early hours of the following morning, wet through, weary and disappointed, without even having unearthed any clue likely to facilitate a solution.

For several days the excitement due to this incident put every other topic of local interest in the shade, but gradually the ferment died down, and ceased to occupy the minds of any but members of the Constabulary, and of the widow of the murdered man. She could never forget: and she plied her neighbours with such incessant questions, and protested so frequently and so openly, that the authorities were lax in their researches and inquiries, and half-hearted in their endeavours to bring the malefactor to justice, that many began at last to suspect that the tragedy might have deprived her partially of reason.

One morning—it may have been a week or perhaps ten days after the occurrence—the parish priest was surprised to receive a visit from her as he was sitting in his private sanctum preparing a mixture of corn, egg-shells, beans, and potato-peelings for his hens; for the worthy father was a great poultry fancier, and his young fowls and fresh eggs were famous throughout three counties.

The priest received her with the courtly bearing that he had acquired many years before in the seminary of Douai, for he was one of the old school, who had received the larger Continental education that was the rule before Maynooth had achieved universal popularity among aspirants to the priesthood. Thus the poor woman was put entirely at her ease from the outset, a fact that may have been fortunate in its results, or the reverse. For the grace and sympathy with which he bowed her to a chair, after having removed a pile of heavy volumes to enable her to sit in it, and invited her to make herself at home, and to tell her story as naturally and as fully as she desired, dispelled all the qualms that she might have experienced in revealing her amazing tale.

She had been praying, she said, the evening before after Benediction, in the Lady Chapel of the parish church. The light was fading: the image of Our Lady was dimly outlined before her, scarcely illuminated but by a few wan candles. The paleness of the light, however, and the solemn calm of the place had supplied what in the then tempest of her feelings her troubled spirit needed. And as she knelt and meditated, the statue gradually assumed the attributes of a living person. With the succeeding moments she became more and more conscious of this, until she observed that the eyes of the figure were no longer rigid and motionless, and the arms of the Virgin were stretched forward in an attitude of blessing. She could no longer have any hesitation in her belief; for, in addition to the movement, a rustling sound had been heard, as the tapering fingers moved aside the leaves and flowers that adorned her shrine, in order, the speaker supposed, that her form and presence might be more fully visible to her petitioner.

The priest listened to this narration in an attitude of the most profound thoughtfulness, only interrupting occasionally with some remark or question in order that it might draw forth an answer likely to afford him a clearer notion of what had actually occurred, or that the woman might be encouraged not to conceal even the smallest detail of her experience.

News travels fast in such places; and it was not long before everybody in the neighbourhood was aware that Our Lady of Faneless had performed a miracle.

The devout believed, the incredulous were puzzled, and all were aroused to an unusual degree of interest and curiosity.

Faneless, it is almost needless to repeat, had been formerly as peaceful and law-abiding as any place in the island; but at that time Sinn Fein doctrines were spreading everywhere like wildfire, and Sinn Fein emissaries were flitting to and fro like silent ghosts, though with far more tangible results than are generally achieved by those illusive beings, sowing broadcast the mistrust and unrest that invariably accompanied them. They were not slow to perceive the immense advantage they might derive from the extraordinary event which speedily became accepted as an undoubted miracle.

A fortnight had now elapsed since the murder of Constable Ninian O'Rorke, and the month in which a large number of people seek the sea or the mountains for their yearly change of scene was already three days old. A number of visitors consequently arrived in Faneless: some of them to restore their exhausted energies or to search in its exhilarating climate relief from various ills

of the flesh; and the waters of its stream possessing healing qualities, it followed that many of them were healed. Other incidents of a violent nature, such as ambushes of police and waylaying of convoys, due to the increased activities of the agitators, occurring in the neighbourhood, the authorities responsible for the preservation of order began to turn their attention to Faneless. It resulted from this that the inhabitants, as well as the harbingers of civil strife, became apprehensive that the patience of the great ones might become seriously strained, and that condign vengeance would be taken for these outrages.

And these last who, though willing and eager to promote unrest, objected to the punishments recoiling on their own skins, sought a means of providing for such a contingency.

They did not have to cudgel their brains for long, for the story of the wondrous miracle, coupled with the super-normal powers of the healing stream, was put about with such tremendous energy and zeal that very soon the fame of the town had spread over three provinces, and Faneless became a place of pilgrimage.

There were, of course, a certain number of simple and sincere people who devoutly believed that the statue of Our Lady had manifested super-natural powers of comfort and healing. But the intriguers, seeing their chance, were determined on exploiting these instances of faith.

Whereupon there ensued one of those extraordinary combinations of genuine feeling and arrant fraud that are so bewildering to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Now pilgrimages generally lead to the assemblage of women, children, cripples, and invalids; but this one brought also a large quota of young men, a very much larger number than would have assembled there in the natural course—good, strong, burly fellows, capable of giving a most adequate account of themselves in a fight, as little troubled by disease as by scruple, unburdened by moral or sentiment, and with no small bias to the brutal. Thus the double effect was achieved. The defenders of the law were likely to see that every precaution was taken to avoid the scandal that might ensue from the desire of the police to wreak vengeance for their murdered comrades in a neighbourhood which had become sacred; while in the second place, if any trouble did arise there would be a force of stalwarts at hand ready to champion the cause of Sinn Fein.

So far as anything in this world can be certain, Faneless was virtually safe from the dangers of reprisal.

II.

John Tarragon, subaltern in the Grey Death's Heads, attached for duty to the first battalion of the Bicestershire Regiment, was something of a character. He had travelled very widely for one of his age. He had walked on stilts across the Landes, and practised tauromachy with a young and very athletic bull in Seville, surviving the encounter, as he had others. He had taken part in a smuggling foray with the Basques, and travelled in a caravan through Arabia. His father was formerly a prominent member of the legation at Adis Ababa, until his diplomatic career, which promised to be brilliant, had been cut suddenly short by his being killed and partially eaten by an Oman tiger. This regrettable incident resulted in the return of little Johnny, who was then just fifteen years old, to the land of his ancestors, but not before he had received that indispensable grounding in various foreign tongues which must necessarily be acquired in early youth by any man who is to become a linguist of distinction. And so, after grappling as a child with Hausa and Arabic, he did not find very much difficulty with Irish or Erse, or whatever is the proper name of the language that has been unearthed to suit the tastes of eccentrics, archæologists, and seditionists. Four months' stay in the green island had enabled Tarragon to make himself fairly adept in that tongue. He could speak Erse at the end of that time as well as the majority of its exponents: for Erse is not their natural medium of speech, and never will be; while, impressive as it may sound to the uninitiated, such knowledge is in nearly every case very elementary, and amounts to no more than a few catch phrases and commonplace expressions. More valuable to Tarragon than his recent acquisition of Erse was his wonderful facility in speaking the Irish brogue, which he did to absolute perfection, and without ever revealing any inaccuracy in tone. This gift he put to profit as much in his unofficial ramblings in pursuit of information, as when singing a topical song or acting a humorous part in the concerts and theatricals that sometimes enlivened the monotony of the troops in barracks.

Now, tidings of the strange doings at Faneless were not slow to penetrate into every part of the country, and local newspapers were not backward in publishing accounts of the marvellous intervention of Heaven and the saints in favour of the oppressed nation. For, strangely enough, these accounts completely overlooked the fact that the original miracle had been performed on behalf of the widow of an

outraged government official, while several other stories of a different kind readily gained credence, and the true account was thrown into the shade: for who could conceive that when the soldiers of the Republic were fighting, ambushing, and slaying on behalf of justice against oppression, the Heavenly Powers could possibly show themselves impartial?

And it befell that one day, just as John Tarragon was returning from a ride — for though there was quite a sporting chance of being kidnapped, there was no definite order against exploring the pleasant scenes in the neighbourhood— a newspaper, containing a full account of the affair of Faneless, was being handed round the mess and read with avidity by all its members.

It may be remarked that all the local newspapers were taken in by the officers of the mess, and contributed more than anything else to arouse their mirth and to relax the tedium of their monotonous existence. The 'Republican Liberator,' the organ of what is called the "inner circle" of Sinn Fein, served this useful purpose better than any other, as every edition that appeared threw some new and interesting light on their characters and achievements, ascribing to them attributes which they had never been conscious of possessing, and acquainting them with acts of their own of which they heard for the first time from its dazzling pages.

Tarragon had always been one of the most enthusiastic readers of the local press, and as soon as he heard that the 'Republican Liberator' contained information that was more than usually striking and melodramatic, he went straight into the mess and seized the first opportunity of securing a copy. Four columns were devoted to the story of Faneless, embellished with such improvements and emendations as the vivid imaginations of the compilers had thought most calculated to advance their cause. The woman for whom the miracle had been performed was stated in this version to be the widow of a soldier of the Republic who had been murdered by one of the Constabulary, and in addition to this miracle there had been others: statues were reported to have sweated blood, and one of them had been heard to speak. Interviews with several visitors who had returned from Faneless were reported verbatim; and there was a long account of the number of sudden recoveries from illnesses till then considered incurable that had resulted from immersion in its sacred stream. None of the retailers of this marvellous story appear to have thought it worthy of remark that the stream had always been noted locally for these effects.

That was what the newspaper said: but the readers in this particular case were people experienced in reading

between the lines, and they had all heard of the murder that had been perpetrated at Faneless rather less than a month before. The exceptional circumstances and tragic mystery surrounding it caused it to be widely discussed.

"There is rather more in this, I think, than meets the eye," was the comment of a certain experienced veteran, who, although habitually silent, was always listened to with respect.

"What do you think their object may be?" asked another.

"Well, of course, there's the obvious one of exciting the public interest and then turning it to their own account; and then, choosing Faneless as a place for the miracle is rather significant, isn't it? A distant spot, far from any military centre: only a short time ago the scene of an outrage. It all points to one thing, doesn't it?"

And then, talking it over between them, they arrived at a conclusion that, with the exception of the true account of the history of Mrs O'Rorke, was only very slightly, if at all, removed from the truth.

Tarragon listened, deeply interested; and, as he listened, a design formed itself in his mind, which he determined to pursue. If it could possibly be managed, he would go to Faneless.

He had not long to wait. A series of startling rumours had already come to the ears of those whose business it was to watch the movements of the Sinn Fein leaders, to acquaint themselves with every artifice which they used to further their projects, and to devise schemes to counteract their designs. And in course of time it became more and more obvious to them that under cover both of the reputation for sanctity that Faneless had acquired, and of the formidable protection against interference which the leaders of rebellion had established, some very suspicious practices were being indulged in secretly.

Some one was wanted who would go and find out what was passing in Faneless.

It had probably occurred to Tarragon, as he thought over what he read in the pages of the 'Liberator,' and collected more information on the subject from obscure sources that were probably accessible to himself alone, that the interest of his superiors in the place of miracles would not stop short at mere curiosity. Already once or twice he had seen the shadows which coming events cast before them, and in private talks by the midnight fireside he had found occasion to indicate them to those who might profit by his communications. His forecasts had generally proved accurate; and he did not let slip a chance that occurred of making known his ambition to investigate the truth of the recent rumours in the place of their origin.

Tarragon was not surprised,

therefore, when one day he received a message from headquarters demanding his instant appearance. The outside of the envelope containing this intimation was marked "Urgent." The potentate into whose room he was ushered on complying with the order was an old friend of his, and an intimacy existed between the two which was founded on mutual appreciation. This higher-grade staff officer, Davenant by name, was a man after Tarragon's own heart. Like Tarragon, whom he never called by anything but his Christian name, John, his youth had been spent in foreign countries, and to this fact was due both his immense admiration for the working of the British Empire and his vast store of original experiences and entertaining stories which he would occasionally relate to the immense gratification of a small circle of favoured hearers. This appreciation of the methods of his countrymen was founded not on uninformed prejudice, but on the knowledge that he had gained by a close and careful study of the systems of foreign governments with which he instituted comparisons that were not always to their advantage. He had known Tarragon's father in former days, and from him had learned many of the secrets of successful dealing with strange peoples, which he was afterwards to bear in mind to his profit. And on one occasion not so very long before, his quick perception and delicate tact in the handling of an incident, that had puzzled the brains of even greater functionaries than himself, proved the means of preventing very serious complications with a friendly foreign power. Wisdom and experience taught him to trust as much or more to the diplomatic handling of a situation than to the strict enforcement of the letter of the law.

"I believe you are anxious to have a look at Faneless," he said, after Tarragon had sat down and lit a cigarette.

"Very anxious indeed, sir," said Tarragon.

"All right, then: there are one or two things about Faneless that we are keen to know, as they are not yet by any means clear. The leading lights of the Republican party have lately been taking a great deal of interest in that little township, almost perhaps as much as you do yourself. It began with a murder, it went on with miracles, it developed into a garrison, and it's culminated within the last fortnight, I understand, judging by all the evidence I have at my disposal, in a prison—a prison that we should like to know more about. And yet it used to be one of the quietest parts of the country, entirely free from sedition or disturbance of any kind."

"That reminds me, sir, that I've got a letter you might like to see. It's from a cousin of mine, The Macghahorn."

Tarragon drew out of his

pocket a large white envelope with the solitary word "Jumbo" written in large letters across it. Inside there was a smaller envelope with his own name and address written on it in the clear and mid-Victorian handwriting, as precise as it was slightly shaky, of a very old man. The letter had been forwarded to Tarragon by hand while he was on leave; and as The Macghahorn had seen fit to give him two steps up in rank when writing his name, some waggish friend, presumably the same who was responsible for the huge inscription "Jumbo" on the outer covering, had added another by scratching out the word "Major," and replacing it by "Lieut.-Colonel the Hon.", and after the name had added the letters "V.C., C.B., D.S.O., R.S.V.P., N.A.C.B., L.B.W."

Davenant appeared very much amused at this. Nothing is truer than that very little jokes amuse very great minds, especially if three-quarters of their lives are passed in duties which are accompanied by a monotony incredible to those who have not experienced it. "So some of your friends call you 'Jumbo,' do they? I didn't know that before. Come along; let's have a look at the letter." John handed him a large sheet of notepaper closely written over in the same handwriting as the envelope. A great deal of it consisted merely in family details irrelevant to the purpose: then there were remarks about the great potato famine which had "thrown us all into a world of strenuosity to relieve it." The Macghahorn had been a busy man, living on his own land for most of his life. He had had few opportunities of looking up his relations, and as he was now an old man of eighty-two, he was all the more eager to see Tarragon, if there was a chance. In the most interesting part of his letter, which came at the end, he said, "To leave no erroneous impression of myself, I had better say at once that I have always been a follower of Mr Parnell's, in strong desire for Irish independence, to be used in reciprocal friendliness with England, and am too old to change my ways: but we need not quarrel over it, if your views are different."

"But he says, I see," Davenant went on after reading the letter carefully and meditating for a moment, "that the people of his part of the country are all Loyalists."

"Yes, no doubt they were until the other day. That's what deepens the mystery."

"And he seems very anxious to see you. How far is Macghahorn from Faneless?"

"About twelve miles, sir; here is the map."

"Excellent. That settles the most difficult problem of all. Of course, now you can go there simply as a cousin of The Macghahorn. Fortunately I don't believe any of the desperadoes in this part of the world know your name.

But it will be advisable that you should not go to Faneless straight from Ballybouchon. It is never well to take risks. And you mustn't take anything with you in the way of military luggage—valises with your name marked on them, or things of that sort. Perhaps a day or two's leave in England first wouldn't come amiss," and he smiled in the well-known manner that had often conciliated opponents and put the timid at their ease. "And then you could come straight back to Macghahorn. When you're there, I can find means of communicating with you through mutual friends."

Davenant then gave Tarragon an outline of the main subjects on which information was needed.

From reports received it was suspected that servants of the lawful government who had been kidnapped, and such refractory members of the Republican party as their more zealous confederates did not see fit to kill outright, were confined in some place either in the town of Faneless or its near surroundings. Anything that he could find out which would tend to throw light on this question might be of the greatest use in elucidating, even if it did not definitely solve the mystery. Above all things, it was necessary that the authorities should have a clearer idea than they had at present about the numbers of prime agents of revolution hidden within its precincts, their effect upon its inhabitants, and the influence of the new developments on the attitude of these towards the authorities. He ended by suggesting that Tarragon should lose no time in starting.

It so happened that Tarragon missed the train after all his efforts, and as this entailed four hours of waiting and the club was not far from the station, he wandered in there for luncheon. It was a singularly comfortable club, homely without the slightest attempt at pretension, and its luncheons and dinners formed a very acceptable change. Walking into the smoking-room, his eyes were greeted by the sight of a well-known figure in one of the arm-chairs, absorbed in the pages of the 'Republican Liberator.' This was the regimental padre, the man who contributed more than any one else in the countryside to render the life of the garrison endurable. Not only was he as kind-hearted a man as you could meet, but he was the soul of humour and merriment, keeping the dinner-table whenever he was present in a perpetual roar of laughter, a delightful state of affairs that was only too often thrown into a frightful contrast by the gloomy and abject silence occasioned by his absence.

"I have just been reading a very curious article in this paper about Sinn Fein courts," he said, as Tarragon came in; "it reminds me of a funny experience that I had the

other day in a town not far from here. I was accosted by a beggar in the street asking for money, and in a moment of weakness I gave him a coin. I had forgotten all about the incident, when much later on in the day and in an entirely different part of the town, a man came up to me and said, "Father, I believe you gave two shillings this morning to a man who stopped you in the street." I admitted that I had. Then he said, "Well, please don't give him any more money. He's a bad character. We've got our eye on him and we'll look after him."

Tarragon was interested, and pressed the padre to give him further details.

"Thinking the incident over," said he, "three things occurred to me. First of all, that you can't do very much here that isn't noticed. Secondly, that these fellows, blackguards as many of them and their satellites are, have yet some idea of self-respect; and thirdly, that they are astonished at the sight of a priest giving rather than receiving money."

The padre's remarks were often pithy, and his threefold comment on the situation appealed greatly to Tarragon.

"You're always charitable, padre, but I can't help thinking that even your good nature is wasted on such people. Haven't they lost all claim to respect? They rule by terrorism. They act for themselves alone. And they're supported by foreign gold."

At this the padre said no word, and gave no sign of dissent. He went on talking and laughing as only he could laugh for more than an hour. It was not only what he said, but the way he said it that made his merriment so infectious and irresistible; and a great many of his stories related to beggars whom it appeared he could never avoid, for his genial good-natured face must have filled their souls with hope. On one occasion he was buying a penny newspaper at a bookstall. The smallest change he had was half-a-crown, and the paper-seller, having no small change himself, turned to a beggar who was standing by. Whereupon the beggar immediately came forward with two shillings and five coppers. The padre took the paper and was just strolling away, when, lo and behold! Lazarus, nothing daunted, having loftily pocketed the half-crown, came up and tried to beg some of the small coins back.

III.

Tarragon's journey to England was uneventful, and he spent three days of uninterrupted enjoyment in the family circle, all of whom pressed him to tell them more than any

one man could possibly know about the recent events in Ireland. They seemed to think that as well as relating his experiences, he could provide them with the one and only certain solution of the knotty problem; but at this he demurred. Even if he possessed it, which he didn't, it was not his business.

On the fourth day a letter arrived from The Macghahorn with important news. The chieftain's son, Captain Robert Macghahorn, was himself in England, and it was hoped that John would be able to see him before his return. The house where he was staying being only a short distance from John's home, he drove over there the following morning. Cousin Robert was a man of about forty-three years old, a breezy person, whose chief interest was in every kind of sport. He talked with quite a perceptible Irish brogue, and the two were soon on terms of intimacy, though they had not seen each other for so long that at first sight they were almost strangers. But Tarragon had not bargained for the attitude that his cousin adopted towards his proposed expedition into the wild district of country that lay around Macghahorn. Two months ago such a journey would have been a simple matter. The activities of the revolutionaries had up to that date been directed mainly against the police, and to a minor degree against the soldiers. But lately the aspect of affairs had changed altogether. Sinn Fein had become desperate, rabid, and savage in its methods, and every stranger was liable to be seized, if not killed outright. He instanced cases of which he had personal knowledge, where people starting out on an excursion like the one in question had never returned. He was equally doubtful as to Tarragon's making any discovery worth his while. Only in a small part of Ireland were the railways still running, and he would have to fall back on motor-cars or jaunting-cars as a means of transit. Tarragon's determination, however, to proceed with his quest carried weight with his cousin, and at last Robert yielded to his arguments. He went further than this, and said that as he thought of paying a visit to his home in the near future, he would be very glad if Tarragon would accompany him. The remaining days of leave passed by with breathless and bewildering speed, and when they scrambled into the train at Euston Station on a night when winter had already asserted its supremacy with a freezing wind and threatening snow, they were glad of their overcoats and Scottish plaids as an addition to the scanty coverings provided in the sleeping-cars.

At first sight Macghahorn was not an imposing house. It was square and heavy, and of no particular architectural merit. But the appearance of

the house itself from the outside was amply made up for both by the inside and by the beauty of its surroundings. Macghahorn is one of the few spots in Ireland where the forest has taken possession, and hides the bare face of the open country. A river, the same river that encircles Faneless, flows through the demesne, and to begin a day's fishing you have only to walk a few hundred yards from the hall door. Art has made little attempt to improve on nature, and the stretch of grass between house and stream is unstudded with flower-beds or interspersed with trees. Probably some dwelling stood where the modern house built in Napoleonic days now stands, when Strongbow first landed in Ireland, and the sward has stayed unaltered. The Macghahorn, as he received them in the dim light of the fire in the hall, looked with his grey hair and his long beard like a patriarch. His manner of greeting his cousin, though stately and old-fashioned in its courtesy, was unmistakably sympathetic and sincere, as in a few words he expressed the regard that he had always entertained for his kinsmen, and the pleasure that it gave him to welcome one of them to his home. He conveyed the impression too by everything that he said and did, that its object was to make John feel thoroughly at home, and not at all to show off his own possessions or vaunt the charm of his fireside—a delightful state of affairs that made his visitor feel completely at his ease.

Tarragon had always thought of Irish country houses as stark and grim, lacking all comfort, but made up for by what they had to offer in the way of sport and open-air enjoyment. He found that Macghahorn possessed both merits. The servants were rather faithful retainers than paid hirelings, especially the old butler, Sean Riordan, who seemed to be about the same age as his master, whose graceful manners he had studied to advantage, adopting towards John an attitude of friendly interest that was by no means wanting in deference, for the ruling principle of his life was loyalty to the family on whose land he had lived, and whom he and his had served from time immemorial. And there was the family mascot, Brian Boru, the monkey. He was privileged to do what he liked and go where he liked. His soft woolly coat shone to perfection, and out of the mass of dark silky hair covering his face two knowing eyes were fixed upon the visitor with an expression of rapt attention and curiosity. Usually at dinner-time he sat behind his master's chair, and from this vantage-point he seldom moved, though occasionally he would come down, walk slowly on all-fours across the room, waving his tail gracefully with an air of some one making up his mind, and then surprise one of the assembled

circle by the sudden appearance of a dark and hairy paw round the back of his chair. Between Brian Boru and his master existed an intimacy so close as to create a regret that the animal could not speak: though between Robert and Brian the friendship was one-sided. Robert disliked monkeys.

The conversation at dinner flowed on in an unbroken cheery stream, and though the chieftain preferred to talk about old memories and Robert about current events, John felt so much buoyed up and animated by the good cheer and the excellent wine from the chieftain's cellar that he felt quite capable of doing his duty to both.

It had been rainy during the day, but as the night drew on the wind shifted round to the east, and there was a cold bite in the air. Looking out of his window before going to bed, John saw the ground white with hoar-frost. He drew the curtains, undressed luxuriously by the log-fire, and fell asleep immediately, full of a sense of contentment.

The Macghahorn himself knew nothing of the second and more serious purpose that underlay his visit, and Robert had only the merest inkling of his cousin's designs; but at breakfast-time, when the day's programme was discussed, as an alternative to fishing in the lake, John expressed a wish to explore the surrounding country, and mentioned the word "Faneless." At this the chieftain looked surprised and a little troubled. His hilarity gave place to an air of concern.

"If you have come here for a rest," he said, "I can scarcely recommend Faneless as a suitable place to visit. You know what has happened there lately, I suppose."

John admitted that he did know. Cousin Robert had foreseen that this would occur sooner or later, and for a moment wondered whether it would be judicious to make one last effort to dissuade him. But, after all, he thought, it would be mere waste of words: for John had come to Macghahorn with a definite purpose, and there was no turning him from it.

"Well, if Cousin John really wants to see Faneless, and I know he takes an interest in these things, there is no reason why I shouldn't have Dolly put into the dog-cart, and we could start about ten. We need not be there more than a few hours, and we can be back before dark."

It sounded almost too good to be true. John had expected opposition, and found only mild acquiescence. And so it befell that very soon after ten they found themselves well on their journey to the place that was to be so closely linked with their fate.

It was fully an hour before they had passed out of the region of trees into country of quite a different kind. Then the woodland ended, and a long

expanse of rolling turf land spread out before them, with here and there a ploughed field or a root-crop to break the monotony.

Half-way down the hill there was a cross-roads, and the route to the left led to Faneless. In the angle made by the branching of the ways stood a small house with a quaint projecting porch. The front had once been white, but now was yellow with age. It had four square window-frames with all the windows shut and the blinds drawn, which added to its melancholy dejected appearance. Its thatched roof was sodden and worn with the rains of a thousand torrents. In front of the porch stood a man tall, with broad shoulders, and a dark moustache. His ancient bowler hat and the remains of what had once been fur on the collar of the dingy overcoat that was drawn closely round him gave him the air of a tradesman or lower middle-class man who might have seen better days. They would hardly have taken any notice of him but for the unavoidable impression that he was watching them closely. He nodded to Robert, and wished him good morning as they passed. But it was not a genial greeting. And then the man withdrew inside the porch.

"Who is that man?" said Tarragon.

"A man called Balty, who was for some time my father's bailiff. Our former bailiff was a splendid old fellow called Tom Brodrick: he died about seven years ago; and when my father was looking about for some one to take his place, this man's former employer, who lives just over the hill there—and he pointed to a great clump of firs that stood out on the horizon beyond a stretch of park-land—happened to be selling most of his land. Balty had a good character: he was young, he was thoroughly experienced in his job, and he was reputed to be honest and reliable in business matters. He couldn't be quite the same thing to us as old Brodrick, but he did his work very well. But when the war began there was trouble. Nearly all the men on my father's estate, who were the right age, enlisted directly, either in the yeomanry or the local regiment. This man refused to go. No argument had any weight with him, though all were tried, and a year afterwards he left us, and since then we have scarcely seen him."

"Was he popular with the people?"

"Not exactly popular, but influential. He didn't belong to this part of the country, and for that reason they looked on him askance. Also there was a rumour that he was of foreign origin, and you can understand how that would prejudice them against him in such an old conservative corner as this is. But he was clever and well-educated, and careful not to offend their suscepti-

bilities, so that he was respected even if not beloved; and he had a way of getting them round to his way of doing things."

Tarragon reflected on what he had heard, and forbore to question his cousin further.

A few minutes afterwards they came near to a small village that lay not very far from their journey's end. Robert, asked for its name, said that it was called Killiney. All at once the khaki uniforms of a group of soldiers appeared just in front of them, an unusual sight in that part of the country. From the midst of the soldiers stepped forward a young officer. He was tall and slight. On his tunic there were black buttons, and in his cap a silver badge that shone gaily in the sunlight. With his merry sparkling eyes and his frank and open manner, his appearance was the least calculated to inspire mistrust or antagonism that one could well imagine. A moment after they came up his cap blew off in the wind, and they saw that he had dark curly hair that contrasted strangely with the chestnut colour of his moustache.

"Good morning," he said cheerily, more as if he were greeting old friends than holding up suspects. "May I ask your names, please, and see any papers that you have to identify you?"

Tarragon thanked his stars that he happened to have a letter addressed to "John Tarragon, Esq.," and bare of any mention of rank or regiment. Every human sentiment would have prompted him to make himself known to the officer, but news travels with demoniacal speed in that strange land, and caution warned him to keep up his character of a mere civilian visitor. If the soldiers had seen him greet their commander as a brother officer, they would have talked about it in barracks, and the news would soon have reached the ears of interested civilians.

"One hears a great deal," said Robert, after they had satisfied their inquirer that they were loyal subjects, "about the 'brutal military' and rot of that kind—but, by Jove! nobody could say that officer wasn't extraordinarily civil and friendly."

Between the time of their leaving the village and of their arrival on the outskirts of Faneless, Tarragon had leisure to reflect on the two small incidents of their journey. The figure of the man they had seen standing by the porch of the small house contrasted forcibly with the officer and his men.

He thought of the smart and debonair demeanour of the troops and their leader, and felt proud to be able to claim comradeship with them. The difference between them and the skulking figure at the porchway represented the gulf that divided the ideas for which they stood.

He was interrupted in his reverie by the voice of Robert.

"D'you see the big building on the hill over there to our right. That's the asylum of Faneless."

Certainly it stood in the most commanding position, and might have been a palace rather than an abode of lunatics. A square and solid mass of grey stone, it reminded John of the Escorial, the combination of a monastery and a palace built by Philip the Second of Spain as a retreat for his old age. But another reflection followed rapidly on the first. A scene that he had witnessed months before in a far-away part of the country came vividly before him—a chance occurrence that had shown how such a place might harbour intrigue and become the centre of plots against the Government. If it could be done, it would be worth while knowing more of this asylum. And various passages in his conversation with Davenant came back to him with renewed and fuller meaning.

"Now, what is it that you'd be seeing in Faneless?" said Robert, displaying in voice and manner the purely Irish side of his nature, for county gentlemen possess the fortunate gift of a dual personality, and are equally at home in the most distinguished circles of a capital or in the society of the simplest peasant. "Is it these bleeding statues you're anxious to look at? Though, for myself, I can't understand a sensible man wanting to waste time over them."

"I'm with you there," said Tarragon. "What about the asylum?"

"The asylum! What would you be looking at the asylum for? It's my advice to you, as well as to every other man, to be keeping out of asylums as well as graveyards as long as ye can."

"I've seen bleeding statues, and saints who open and shut their eyes, and dead trees that blossom, in other parts of the world, but I can't ever remember having been into an asylum."

Cousin Robert was decidedly puzzled. But John was his guest, and he had no other object but to please him, so he told him that a certain Dr Mahaffy, whom he knew very well, would no doubt be only too willing to supply them with the necessary credentials.

Dr Mahaffy lived in a small house close to the entrance of the great building. It was a dingy little haunt, more particularly in winter, when its surroundings were no longer enlivened by the brilliant colours of the garden, to which the owner devoted all the leisure time at his disposal. It is one of the traits that the Scots and the Irish have in common, that both excel in hospitality; and an excellent luncheon, as well as munificent supplies of whisky, were immediately placed before the visi-

tors. Robert gave the doctor to understand that they had come mainly with the object of calling on him, and accepted his hospitality with great warmth and gratitude, deeply regretting at the same time that they would have to go away directly afterwards.

On hearing this, their host immediately guessed that their real object in visiting Faneless was to see the church and the scenes of the supposed miracles; and he made no secret of his utter disillusionment with regard to those wonders. "It's certain," said he, "that the story is all piffle and nonsense from the beginning. Now, wouldn't you like for to be spending your time more advantageously by looking at our place, the most famous asylum in all Ireland, and the only sight worth seeing in the whole of Faneless?"

Robert gave John a cautious kick under cover of the table—a hint so utterly unnecessary that you may be sure it was not disregarded.

"Sure," went on the doctor, "this story has been used to make the place as famous as if it were a racing centre. Ye can't imagine what an outrageous increase of prices and dishonesty among the tradespeople here has resulted from this monstrous imposture that's been put upon the poor harmless greenhorns. And doubtless, captain, you'll know as well as meself who it is that we've to thank for it. Why, the same people who are the cause of all that we've had to suffer these twelve months and more. Indeed, it's nothing but trouble that they've brought us. Now I'm a loyalist meself, and belong to a family that have always been loyalists. And it's my belief that most of the people in this country are loyal at heart, only they're afraid to own it. It's terrorised they are by the small gang that rules them and dupes them. And this invention about miracles is only the last of their shameful fictions and forgeries. And the people in the town, they don't protest against it at all, for it's helping them it is to make the most infamous charges for quarters that are devoid of all comfort and swarming with legions of fleas."

Robert made a rule of being careful in talking of matters of this kind. To his idea, the country of his birth had always been a good place to live in as long as one kept off politics. He agreed with his host, but preferred to change the subject by praising his roast beef and whisky, and to encourage him to talk about his new fernery, which the doctor rightly regarded as his first and foremost claim to celebrity.

The doctor was very eloquent in his efforts to persuade them to stay where they were, and his most powerful argument, which he kept in reserve till the last, was, "If ye can spare the time to come round with me, I'll show ye some strange

sights that ye've never seen before, and that'll take the paint off all the miracles that were ever performed in history," his native dialect becoming more and more pronounced in proportion to his enthusiasm. The visitors took a great deal of persuading, but in the end they yielded gradually and gracefully to Dr Mahaffy's repeated entreaties.

The asylum was a marvellous place, entirely organised and supervised by Sisters of Mercy, with whom the doctor appeared to live on terms of the greatest amity, in spite of his decidedly anti-clerical tendencies, which cannot have been a secret to them. It included a hospital, school, laundry, and farm, as well as a chapel and two immense recreation halls. Certainly Tarragon, and perhaps Robert—though this is more doubtful—were pleased at the prospect of being able to make a lengthy survey; but the doctor was so full of his intention of showing them something that it would be worth their while to see that, while the Sisters displayed great keenness to explain to them all the merits of the chapel, the library, the linen rooms, and the wards, of the neatness and methodical arrangement of which they were justly proud, he made scarcely any attempt to conceal his impatience.

Eventually he had his way. He escorted them to a ward in which there was a patient who was, it seemed, the object of his peculiar interest. This was a young man, apparently about eighteen years of age. He had been brought there by a strange individual, provided, it is true, with the necessary medical certificate, who stated that he had been asked by the boy's parents to confine him in the asylum, as the boy's conduct when at home had been dangerous. He had threatened, so it was said, to kill his young sister; and before this culminating incident, he had gained the reputation of being so eccentric and untrustworthy that no one could handle him until, as a last resort, his relations were by no means unwilling to solve the problem by sending him to the madhouse.

When the doctor tried to make the boy talk, he only talked at random, and in language that was quite unintelligible. Added to this, he was suffering from some disease of the spine that disabled him from standing firmly on his feet; and when at last the doctor made him understand that he wanted him to get up and go to the other end of the room, he succeeded only in walking a few paces. It dawned on them gradually during these proceedings that the doctor had his tongue in his cheek, and John Tarragon avers to this day that during the course of the interview he noticed an unmistakable wink of the doctor's eye which was farthest from the Sister who accompanied them.

In the midst of their observations of this peculiar patient, one of the Sisters came into the room to say that a certain woman under her charge had heard that Captain Macghahorn was in the asylum, and was anxious to see him. They were taken into a small compartment some distance from the body of the institution, where they found a woman who appeared at first sight to be weighed down and bent with the load of many years. But directly she saw Captain Macghahorn, she rose from the dejected and crouching position in which they had first viewed her on entering the room, and advanced towards him with an alacrity that formed a striking contrast to her former air of exhaustion. "Ah, sure," she said, fixing her eyes on him with an expression of great intentness, "it's your worship's self, and Heaven knows I never thought when I heard them say that ye'd been seen coming in here that it wasn't God's mercy had sent you."

Both of them were astonished at her knowing of their visit, for no one had mentioned Captain Macghahorn's name; and on the Sister's own admission, the woman spent almost the whole of her day in absolute solitude.

"And surely now ye'll be coming to tell me if you have any news of my husband, and whether it's better he is, or as near death as they were thinking him."

Something in the woman's voice and manner were familiar to Robert, and yet he turned a face of blank astonishment to their conductor.

"It's Mrs O'Rorke," he said; "she whose husband was done to death in the summer."

"Mrs O'Rorke?"

"Yes; she who was Katherine Devarney in the days when you may have known her."

Recollections of his boyhood at Macghahorn came back to him as he recalled a fair-haired girl, a daughter of a former lodge-keeper long since dead; and he remembered how once when he had been fishing—he must have been about seven years old at the time—he had fallen into a pool, and she had dragged him out and taken him up to the house amid a hubbub of eager inquiries.

"Katherine Devarney," she said; "and sure, now the memory of the old times isn't lost to your honour," and began to pour out the lamentable story of how her husband had been set upon returning from his duty early one morning and wounded in the head, and was he dead or no? The tragedy, said the Sister, had deprived the poor soul of her reason. And yet when he came to speak to her, if her reason was at fault, he had ample evidence that her memory was unmistakably fresh and active.

The fevered and unending torrent of words recalled to Robert incidents and scenes that he had almost entirely

forgotten, and others to which he had never given a thought for years. She hoped he would come to see her again, and by her supplications won from him a promise.

Tarragon listened in silence, and meditated on what he heard. He was not anxious to go, and hoped they might see more. This did not prevent him, however, from looking at his watch, and remarking to his cousin that it was late: but the more they looked at their watches, the more anxious became Mahaffy to show them something new.

"But it's still early, and if you'll only stay a few more minutes, I can show you something really remarkable. There's a man here I can show you who was brought in the day before yesterday shivering with terror—well, I might say quaking with terror, for fear I was telling a lie—and they told me he was mad; but it's my belief he was no more out of his mind than what you and I might be."

They were forthwith dragged off by their indefatigable host to witness this new marvel.

An iron shutter in the middle of a door, drawn noiselessly back, revealed an oblong cell, twenty feet by ten, in which, lying stretched out at full length on a mattress, they saw a tall man with dark hair and olive complexion absorbed in the study of a dingy coverless volume. They must have come up very silently, for he appeared to be quite ignorant of their presence. On the wall by the side of the door hung one of those order-boards commonly used in hospitals, and on it the words, "Solitary confinement: strict observation," caught the attention of Tarragon. The doctor, whose will appeared to be law, insisted on having the door of the cell opened by a warder who was guarding it. The inmate, taken aback by their sudden and unexpected entry, gave a perceptible start, and put down the book that he had been reading. He looked up quickly at the incomers, and in his eyes the expression of bewildered recognition that they conveyed gave no hint of madness, though when Robert addressed him by his name he immediately affected idiocy, and made such a marvellous pretence of being mad that both of them almost believed for a moment that they had been deceived as to his identity. Whether Mahaffy had any inkling of the nature of the situation will never be known to history. And soon afterwards the visitors intimated their desire to be going, this time in less insistent terms than before, and yet in real earnest.

The mysterious inmate of the cell was Balty, the former bailiff.

IV.

When they left the asylum it was already dark. The wind, which had been soft and almost warm during the earlier part of the day, turned cold in the evening. The pony put his ears back, and moved along at the briskest of trots, as if fully conscious that it had shifted several points to the east, and that his stable lay at the end of the journey.

They had reached the near side of a metal bridge which crossed the famous river and formed the boundary point between Faneless and the country beyond, when, without warning, out of the blackness of the night came sharp and angry voices—

"Halt! Get down! Hands up!"

And then, as there seemed to be no very marked inclination on the part of those addressed to comply with this demand, more and angrier shouts—

"Halt! Get down, will ye? Get down, or we'll fire."

This was the first time that either Tarragon or Robert had experienced an encounter of the kind, and being new to it, they did not take it at all in the way that it was meant. The party in front of them, being accustomed either to the most obsequious compliance with their orders or to open defiance, may have been a little puzzled by the moody unconcern of the two people in the dog-cart, who stopped, it is true—they could not well do otherwise, the road being barred by six stalwart men — but showed not the slightest intention of getting down or of holding up their hands. The police (for such they were) became vociferous. "Get down, get down quick, d'you hear? We know all about you. We know who you are. Get down! Hurry up, or we'll put a bullet through you!"

They knew, in fact, nothing whatever about either Tarragon or Robert, but their imaginations were stirred by the excitement of the moment.

The two got down very leisurely, and not in the best of humours. Robert was visibly nettled.

"I am Captain Macghahorn," he said, "the son of The Macghahorn. And may I ask in return who are you?"

"I am Head-Constable Burke," said he who was apparently the leader of the group of police.

The head-constable's manner changed slightly. He motioned to the others to stand back. Robert had recovered from his rather natural surprise, and realised the wisdom of making a virtue of necessity. He therefore explained to him that they had spent the day in Faneless, and were returning to Macghahorn, which was his home.

"Have you any firearms?" said the constable.

"No, we have not."

"I am afraid that I must search you."

They were requested to open their coats, whereupon Burke and another of the police passed hands over their pockets. The police appeared satisfied with this examination, but still unconvinced as to their identity; and Robert and his companion were annoyed at hearing that they would have to be taken to the police barracks for the purpose of proving beyond any doubt that they were the persons whom they professed to be.

Let it be explained, to avoid confusion, that the group of men by whom Robert and Tarragon had been held up belonged to the body who were, until a short time ago, the guardians of the law in Ireland.

Carefully chosen among the staunchest loyalists, and zealous on every occasion to give proof of their unswerving fidelity, these "true blues" had been marked out by the originators of the rebellion as the objects of an unscrupulous and untiring persecution. At a time when the "military" were seldom molested, these devoted men were exposed day and night to continual dangers and surprises.

"L'homme de police," says Balzac, "a toutes les émotions du chasseur." In the case of the "true blues," those emotions had undergone serious modification. Condemned to live inside the walls of a puny barrack in a state of constant expectation of attack from without, thrown upon their own resources for amusement and conversation, boycotted by the timid and malignant—which is to say the greater part of the population—thinking of and discussing nothing but the anxious preoccupations of the moment, it would be surprising if even the bravest and most stoical did not lose their high spirits, and drift by degrees into a state of nervous incertitude and apprehension. This may account in some measure for the fact that when the party reached the police barracks they were at first refused admission by their own comrades.

"Who are you?" snarled an agitated voice through a spy-hole in the heavily-barred iron door. "Oh, you say you're police. We know your sort. We've got a dandy little supply of bombs in here, and we'll let you have one or two in a minute."

"That's cheering," said Tarragon, and at the same moment they heard a window being opened cautiously just above them, and the sound of some heavy object being thrust over the sill.

"I am Head-Constable Burke of Dromore," said the leader of the party.

"And what is the password?"

"Fish."

Then there was silence for a moment, and afterwards the noise of several heavy bolts being withdrawn very slowly one after the other. All the time the spy-hole remained

open, and two dark excited eyes surveyed the arrivals with much suspicion. When the door was at last drawn cautiously back, the whole party walked in single file through a narrow winding passage between two high and carefully constructed parapets of sandbags, up a flight of stairs, into a large and very badly-lighted room. There was a desk at the farther end of the room, and sitting in a chair bending over a pile of documents an oldish man with spectacles, dressed in the uniform of the "true blues." The light was behind him, so that he could not be very distinctly seen; and directly Robert came into the room, he got up from his seat and cried out—

"Mr Robert! Mr Robert! Now who would have thought of finding you here?"

"Certainly not I," said Macghahorn; "and very glad I am to see you, Cully. I should have been glad to see you at any time, but more than ever at this moment."

"And now what would you say to a drop of real good Irish whisky: real good, I mean it, in spite of these disthressful times?"

"I should be very glad of it, especially after the near escape I've had from your bombers and riflemen at the door."

"I'm sorry your honour should have had so much throuble; but no doubt you'll understand that we must use caution, seeing what terrible events we've been witnessing lately." And then he whispered into Robert's ear, "There's been an accident this evening in the neighbourhood, and these men are quite new to the place. They come from another district althogether, and they don't know the gintry roundabouts, more's the pity." Then, after a pause, "And your friend there, he'll surely be having a drop of whisky too." And Tarragon, who had remained hitherto in the background, came forward and was introduced with a great show of warmth on both sides.

They accepted Cully's invitation with fervour, and twenty minutes afterwards, their captors being now fully satisfied that they were loyal subjects, they were allowed to proceed on their way to Macghahorn with a pass that would save them from a recurrence of any such inconvenience.

When they reached home it was already two hours after the time of their being expected, and the chieftain was in a state of great uneasiness. They had only a few minutes in which to dress, and as it was, dinner had to be put off half an hour after the usual time.

The Macghahorn heard with surprise of their adventure, and looked dubious at mention of another "accident" in the neighbourhood. He spoke of the distress that had been caused him by the postponement of the visit of a cousin from America owing to the unsettled condition of the coun-

try. It was not a very cheery dinner, and Tarragon, who had been debating within himself during the course of the journey whether to take the old man into his confidence, decided to postpone the attempt until a more auspicious occasion.

Dinner was over, and they had gone into The Macghahorn's study. The chieftain himself seemed tired, and expressed a wish to go to bed early. Robert picked up the latest number of the 'Field,' and became absorbed in it and disinclined for conversation. It occurred to Tarragon that he had had very little exercise during the day, and a strong desire came upon him to go out for a stroll before turning in for the night. On his asking Robert if there was any objection to this—

"None at all," said he; "only don't make any noise going out, or you might disturb my father. He sleeps lightly."

The cold was bitter, the wind that was rising sharp and keen. Tarragon walked along the grass by the side of the drive at an easy swinging pace. As far as he could remember afterwards, it must have been a little past ten o'clock. Knowing that the old woman who lived at the lodge, and whose sole occupation in life was to open and shut gates, generally went to bed early, he was surprised to see a light in one of the windows; and his interest increased when on going farther, he saw that the door of the house was open, and that a tallish man was standing just inside talking to a young, fair-haired girl who held a lamp in her hand. He had come up to the house so quietly that they could not have known there was any one near. It was rather unusual that on such a freezingly cold night the man should not have worn an overcoat or covering of any kind. He appeared to be remonstrating with the girl, or making some request that she was unwilling to grant, but their voices were so low that it was impossible to hear any actual words. And then John noticed that there was a slit in the back of the man's coat, and that as the flap blew aside for a moment it disclosed a revolver in his hip-pocket. It happened that the light of the lamp fell full upon it: it could be nothing else but a revolver. Then what should he do? Well, nothing for the moment. That was the obvious course. "It was not his business," he concluded. Instant action was certainly not his business.

The man might be only a keeper or neighbouring farmer, who had been in the habit, illegal doubtless, of carrying the revolver for his protection. And yet—— No, it couldn't escape him that there was something sinister about it all.

He resolved not to touch on the matter when talking to Robert. Certainly not now: not, in any case, until he had taken the night to think it over. So he went back to the

house again, and after hoping that Robert would rest well after the eventful day, retired to his own room.

But he could not sleep; he tossed about. He got up and lit a cigarette, and then another and another. He must have smoked twelve in all. Why had the doctor said that the man whom he had seen that very day at a place four miles distant had been in the asylum since the day before yesterday? Was the doctor himself a confederate in some infamous plot?

That was barely possible: it was out of the question, for the doctor himself had deliberately led them to the solitary cell. Maybe the doctor was of the type that fears neither God nor man: certainly the events of the day all pointed to his being incredibly reckless. The only solution that came to Tarragon was that the doctor was actuated by an impish spirit, and that, partly from self-conceit, partly from desire to entertain his guests by exhibiting the sights of the asylum as something to set off against the exploded wonders of Faneless, he had been led into taking a very injudicious course.

Tarragon knew well from former experiences the kind of punishment meted out by the leaders of Sinn Fein to those who betrayed their secrets. Truly a doctor is in a certain measure a privileged person, allowed certain indulgence by both parties as one who by the incidents of his profession cannot fail to know certain secrets, and who may be valuable to both of them in their hour of need.

But that would not save him were he proved a traitor, or even guilty of a grave indiscretion in circumstances of this kind. And a thrill passed through him as he thought that this might none the less provide him with the clue that would prevent his mission from being fruitless, followed like a flash by thought of the risk they ran, of the danger he might bring upon his cousins by his eagerness. As he pondered over the events of the day, trying to form them into ordered sequence, what a tangle of bewildering speculations raced one another through his brain. Naturally he could not sleep.

He awoke at dawn the next morning, conscious that he had spent a few hours in a slumber disturbed by a medley of strange dreams, uppermost among which in his consciousness was the sensation of sustaining an encounter with a wild boar, whose desperate endeavours to bite him had only just been frustrated. After a hurried breakfast Tarragon went out into the open air in the hope of composing his overtaxed and weary brain into some sort of tranquillity. He walked down one of the woodland paths in the direction of the sea, and crossing a rath, climbed up the steep bank on the other side. Here, on the summit of a hill, he looked out towards the sea. A battle was

in progress between the sunshine and the storm-clouds. For a moment the sun would burst forth, soon afterwards eclipsed by darkness looming over the headlands, and snow mingling with the sea foam. He walked back by a different path, which brought him to a small gate on the opposite side of Macghahorn to the main lodge.

As he crossed the road, he saw a side-car turn into the drive. It contained the driver and one other person, whose face he could not see, as their backs were turned to him. He was rather intrigued at the idea of visitors to Macghahorn, and wondered who it was; so he walked up the drive briskly, anxious not to miss the new arrival. When he reached the house, he found that his anticipations were justified, and that a visitor had arrived. He heard voices in the library, and a little after, going in, found the chieftain engaged in what appeared to be a confidential interview with a young man. They were standing together at the farther end near the fire.

"Am I in the way, sir?" he said, feeling that he might be *de trop*.

"No, not at all. Sit down, John. This is Mr——"

"Wynterfold," said the visitor, and turned towards John.

Something familiar in the appearance of the newcomer struck him immediately. Although he was dressed in the garb of peace, there was no mistaking the colour of his curly hair or the genial greeting of his merry brown eyes.

"I am sure I have seen you somewhere before," and almost before he had spoken, the other said—

"On the road the other day, just this side of Killiney. I suppose you were going to Faneless."

"Yes; we were going to Faneless."

"Rather an unhealthy spot to be visiting on leave, wasn't it?"

The remark took Tarragon off his guard. His surprise must have been visible in his face.

"Well, I suppose it is. Not exactly the place for a rest cure, but I'm not in need of one at the moment, though we all may be if this sort of thing goes on much longer."

"You seem to have curious taste in the way of sight-seeing, anyhow. The asylum and the police barracks are scarcely among the most famous beauty spots."

At this point The Macghahorn called Wynterfold away. There was a matter of importance between them apparently, and he looked concerned.

Tarragon sat down in an armchair and picked up an illustrated newspaper. The first thing that he saw in it was a picture of the wife of one of the most notorious rebels, at that moment in prison, bending over a cradle with a baby in it. His soul revolted at the thought of the imbecility of the press.

Hundreds of the constables who had been killed left widows and orphans presumably no less sorrowful, and yet no photographs of these appeared in the illustrated newspapers.

Wynterfold got up and said he must be going, and as The Macghahorn had his back to them and was opening a safe near the fireplace, he seized the opportunity to throw a letter into one of the baskets that stood on the writing-table. Tarragon, looking into the basket, saw that it was addressed to himself. Then The Macghahorn came towards them after locking the safe, and handed Wynterfold a small object neatly done up in paper.

Directly they went out of the room Tarragon picked up the letter and read it. It was from Davenant, and like all Davenant's letters, short and to the point. He told Tarragon that he could trust Wynterfold and tell him what he wished, and that Wynterfold would act as a liaison to hand on to the proper quarter anything that could be discovered.

Fortunately, the letter was so short and so clear that John spent only a few seconds in mastering its contents. He then went out into the hall, and succeeded in stopping Wynterfold, who was just getting into the car, and who was either not yet certain as to whether Tarragon was really the man he wanted, or careful to avoid at all events the mistake of being too forward.

"Can you give me a lift," said Tarragon, "for a short way along the road? I want to go to a house which lies in your direction."

Wynterfold signified his entire willingness, and Tarragon got up. Both were burning to talk about their mutual secret. This, however, was out of the question until they could find a means of getting out of hearing of the driver of the jarvey; but at last a hill gave them their chance, and making use of the very plausible and reasonable excuse that the weight of three people behind him would probably shorten the life of the horse, they jumped off and very soon succeeded in letting the vehicle outdistance them to such a length that no syllable of their conversation could reach the ears of the driver.

"I was lucky finding you as I did," said Wynterfold directly they were well out of hearing. "Did you find anything at the asylum?"

"Yes, I think I found something that may be useful, but I can be certain of nothing as yet. There was one incident of our visit that seemed to me particularly odd. On our way to Faneless we saw a man called Balty, a rum fellow in appearance, rather the kind that you'd expect to be a Sinn Feiner. He was standing in front of a house which I'll show you when we pass it; and I can swear that the very same man was in the asylum, catalogued as a lunatic, when we were visiting it. The doctor, a man called Mahaffy, said that

he had been brought in two days ago, and was quite unaware, it appears, that he had been out of the place where we found him since his arrival. But stranger even than that, I happened quite by chance to go out yesterday evening for a stroll, and close to the lodge gate I saw a man, who I am sure was this same man Balty, talking to a girl there, and he had a revolver in his pocket."

"Are you sure that this man's name is Balty?"

"Certain; Robert knows him well. Before the war he was bailiff at Macghahorn for a time."

"Nothing's certain in this country. But it looks as if your trip to Faneless wasn't thrown away. And did you see any other curious people?"

"Yes. One was a woman, the widow of Constable O'Rorke who was killed in the summer. She appeared quite mad, delirious, and raving; and a boy, or, rather, a young man, who was said to be a lunatic, but who had very little wrong with him that I could see, except that he'd damaged his leg and couldn't walk."

"What did he look like?"

"Rather unusual. Very black hair, pale complexion, and very light-grey eyes and a slight squint."

"Well, I think this matter is well worth the trouble of looking into. Time's short, but we must manage to meet again somewhere to talk over all this. I'm at a place called Calgadoun near here with a detachment. There are only two companies. It's by the sea, about six miles from you, and I go occasionally to see the coastguards. There is a little club where we can forgather, not a bad little haunt, and it has the advantage that we should be able to meet there without attracting too much attention. Not here. Is to-morrow afternoon about four convenient to you?"

"Yes, I can manage that. I could come by train."

"And, by the way, don't carry arms."

"No, for the good reason that I haven't got any."

"Well, that's all right. Remember, to-morrow at four. You won't fail me?"

"Not I."

The car halted at the top of the hill; the driver looked back to see how far behind they were.

"Sure, when the gintry gets together," he said to himself, "how they're afther telling one another all the news of the last twelvemonth. And never a thought for to be keeping the baste waiting in the cauld."

The "baste" shook himself, and looked round curiously at the pair as they clambered in.

Tarragon remembered there was something he wanted to show his companion. And five minutes afterwards Wynterfold felt a dig in the ribs, and looking round took stock of the forlorn-looking habitation on their left, which wore an even more doleful aspect than ever amid its dark and solitary

surroundings. After which Tarragon left the two to continue their journey together, and walked back by paths over the fields and through the woods to Macghahorn.

Luncheon was a latish meal at his cousin's house, and he knew that if he arrived by a quarter to two or shortly afterwards, he would be in perfectly good time. And as he believed in combining business with pleasure, he decided to make a good round of it and see something more of the country.

The most trying feature of life in Ireland for all classes in these times, in which landowners, loyalists, police, military, and rebels share alike—it is the only point they all have in common—is that the liberty of the subject is so largely curtailed by the prevailing political conditions that no one can walk abroad in safety or with any assurance. For the "military" it is forbidden by order; for rebels it may mean at any hour of the day capture and imprisonment; for constables it frequently spells certain death; for ordinary individuals, no matter what their rank or sympathies, it entails being suspected by both parties. No wonder that Tarragon, as he had done before at Ballybouchon, looked well at the people whom he met, and that they looked well at him. But it was worth the risk for the sake of the fresh air and the novelty of the surroundings.

He returned to Macghahorn to find the house in a state of the wildest upheaval and excitement. For the first news that greeted him was that the chieftain himself had just been arrested and taken away by a party of soldiers who had arrived there less than an hour before.

"What for?"

"For concealing arms," said old Riordan, who was in a state bordering on tears.

Tarragon could hardly believe that the figure he saw before him was the same dignified and imperturbable old man who had attended on him with such care the first evening.

"That ever I should have lived to see the day, your honour," wailed the distraught major-domo. "Lord Kerrigan's house burned to the ground; Mr Chichester, the resident magistrate, and one of the nicest gintry in the county, done to death in the dark and nobody any the wiser; and now my old master, who never harmed a fly, arrested on his own hearthstone. And all within a month, sorr, all within a month." And a catch in his voice stifled further comment or lamentation.

The next person to give his version of the story was Robert, livid with indignation. All the revolvers, he swore, had been given up except one, and surely a man must have something to defend himself with in these times from the danger of sudden attack. Himself an

ex-officer, and the house well known for its loyalty! The authorities must be mad. They had behaved, he admitted, with civility and consideration, but were firm in their insistence that his father must go with them.

It may be easily understood that the place was plunged in gloom. And the rest of the day, which was spent by Tarragon in hopeless efforts to console his cousin, is not among his happiest recollections. Inwardly he was very much sustained by the thought that he would be seeing Wynterfold on the morrow, and that he would probably be able to find out from him what was the motive for such a move. For the present there was nothing for it but to await events and be quiet. He took advantage of Robert's partial return to a serene frame of mind after dinner to explain to him that he had made an appointment to meet Wynterfold the following afternoon.

It would not be difficult for him to catch a train that left the nearest station to Macghahorn shortly before three, and to reach the club in good time for his appointment. And then he led his cousin round with some difficulty to talk on other topics, for at present he too must be in the dark as to the pressing problems of the moment. It was better so.

The next day Tarragon, as the hour of his interview with Wynterfold drew nearer, realised that a new matter of some gravity had been added to those which they originally intended to discuss. They were both punctual to their appointment, arriving a quarter of an hour before the selected time. Wynterfold inquired after Davenant, whom he described as "one of the best," and after lavishing on him praise which every one who knew him would willingly accord, and exchanging one or two commonplaces, they settled down to business. Luckily the club smoking-room was empty. It often was in those times. Wynterfold started off with—

"I suppose you want to hear about your cousin?" and so saved Tarragon trouble. "Well, the news was as unexpected to me as it no doubt was to you. It is another odd business. I went there nominally to inquire whether he had any contraband to hand over: they're very strict about these things lately. He argued with me for some time, asked what he would do if the house was attacked by rebels and they were absolutely defenceless. All I could say was that an order was an order, and that there was an end to it.

"Then it appears that a search party came to search the lodge, which has lately become suspect. Others besides yourself have noticed shady people hanging about there. In the lodge they had a big find—revolvers and some ammunition; and then it occurred to Croft, who was in

command of the party and at liberty to search any place if he saw fit, to go up to the house. They took him round without making the slightest objection, but he noticed that they hesitated about letting him enter one of the bedrooms. He said that he must go in, and in a wardrobe which was locked there was a revolver. Croft told me the story himself. When they were going round the room The Macghahorn, who was with them, said to Croft as they came to the wardrobe, 'I'm afraid there's something here that I shall have to hand over to you,' and forthwith produced the revolver. There was no alternative to arresting him. Croft then went into his study and explained the situation as tactfully as possible. He said that he must be aware there was an order that no civilian was allowed to have firearms in his possession, and that as he had infringed the order he was liable for the penalty. 'But surely they won't allow the arrest of a former Lord-Lieutenant of the county whose political opinions are beyond suspicion,' said The Macghahorn; 'and, besides, I know your General. He is a friend of mine.' Croft told him that he would no doubt have an opportunity of explaining the matter to the General, but that he must carry out his orders. And there it ended."

"And how do you think it will end?"

"That's not for me to say. But I don't suppose they'll carry matters to extremes. Between you and me, I think it may prove to be a very fortunate thing that your cousin has been removed from Macghahorn just at present. This country within ten miles of Faneless is a hotbed of rebels. As I've already told you, the very lodge has been discovered to be a favourite meeting-place of the gun-men. The conspirators know that the inmates of the house are never about late at night; and it is a quiet secluded spot off the main roads where they are not very likely to be disturbed by picquets, either of military or police."

"Ought I not to warn Robert?"

"I don't think you would do any good; and yet if he's discreet he might be able to find out one or two things for us in his capacity as master of the house."

Tarragon wondered if it was possible to rely on Robert's discretion. He could see that Wynterfold did not like to touch on the bigger and knottier question of the asylum while his anxiety as to his cousin was still unallayed; so having, as he supposed, heard all that Wynterfold had to say, he plunged into the second matter.

"Now, have you found out anything to add to what I told you yesterday or to throw any light on it?"

"Well, there are two things that I want to ask you. First,

about the doctor: how did he come to show you all these extraordinary people?"

"I can't at present ascribe it to anything else but his vanity. Robert buttered him up, praised his whisky and his garden, of which he's very proud, and put him in such a good humour that he exhausted every means in his power to keep us before he let us go. He's a lonely man, he likes companions, and he's bored to death, I believe, in that asylum with only the sisters and the warders to talk to."

"Ah! and that suggests another point. Did the sisters show any objection to your visiting these patients?"

"We scarcely saw any of them except the one who came round with us. She was a simple homely individual, with no thought but to show off her linen rooms and her French library, which contained nothing that I could see except the most elementary devotional books. I think it most unlikely that she had any inkling of a mystery connected with the inmates. And the doctor appeared to manage her pretty much as he liked."

"And have you any explanation to account for those things?"

"I have an idea of my own, though I'd scarcely presume to call it an explanation. In the first place, there's no reason why the Sinn Feiners shouldn't contrive to use an asylum as a place of refuge for perpetrators of outrages. All the posts on the boards that control these institutions are now held by people who are very far from being loyal. The old ruling class in Ireland haven't lately had a say in such matters. Even those who remained in possession of any power were conquered in the last elections. But, as far as I know, little effort has yet been made to find out to how great an extent the sympathies of the newcomers are with the extremists among the rebels. Also, and this is rather important, when I last saw Davenant, he mentioned the fact that Faneless, or some part of Faneless, was being used as a prison."

"I've also heard rumours of the kind quite recently. By the way, about this lame boy that you mentioned. I happened to give your description the other day to one of the Intelligence people, and he said he had heard of such a man before in connection with outrages in another part of the country. Grey eyes, black hair, and a squint—a combination that should easily be recognised. Yes; I'll see Vardon, the Intelligence officer, again about this, and by putting two and two together, we'll try to get something substantial to work on. And now, before we part, let's take a stroll on the beach."

V.

The patrician calm of Macghahorn was by no means restored on the following morning by the appearance of a most unusual missive on Robert's breakfast-table. Thus it ran—

"BE PREPARED.

"Beware of the Black Hand, as it has come to our Notice that you are giving information to the Police About the I.R.B. So Beware of Death. Be Prepared.

Signed by Me. I.R.B."

At any ordinary time he would have concluded that this singular document had originated in the design of some facetious friend to play him a practical joke. But the events of the past week had accustomed him to such a large measure of the unforeseen and the unexpected that they had begun to prey on his nerves, and he was at present almost inclined to take the matter seriously. None the less he put a bold face on it, and as he threw it over to Tarragon, he attempted to pass it off as a joke.

"It seems to me that we're beginning to need our revolvers just when they've taken them away from us. And what a beautiful day, too, to be preparing to meet death. The first fine day that we've had since we've been in Ireland."

The sun was streaming in at the windows, casting a golden splendour over everything and over the two thoughtful individuals at the table.

"Well, I'm damned," said Tarragon. "D'you know, I've often heard of these things, but this is the first one I've ever seen. They don't always mean anything, however. Yet nowadays I scarcely think anybody could have sent it for a joke. A blotchy postmark, common paper that you could buy at any village shop, dirty thumb-mark on the cover, and the stamp upside down. I wonder what Sherlock Holmes would make of it."

"He might make something of the thumb-mark, if it isn't too dirty."

"Yes," said Tarragon meditatively, and inwardly resolved that he would show the thing to Vardon.

A letter came to Tarragon also that day. It was handed to him by Riordan at luncheon, and it had no stamp and no postmark. It said simply, "The matter is being attended to. Same place and time. Two days." That must mean four o'clock on Friday at the club at Colgadoun.

"Such is civil war," said he to Robert as he went out.

Tarragon kept his tryst at the Hartington Arms, and there he learned that the information that he had been able to obtain coincided with certain scraps of

knowledge which had reached the neighbouring military authorities by means of anonymous letters. And it had been arranged that on the night of the coming Saturday and Sunday a raid would be concerted upon the asylum. Wynterfold intimated vaguely that he might take part in it.

He wanted to see Tarragon after the raid was over, and they fixed a rendezvous at the entrance to the asylum at midday on Sunday. After that they waited on destiny, to see what it would bring forth.

And so, on the following Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, for it was already nearly an hour past midnight, the old adage, "Let sleeping dogs lie," was abandoned for another one, "Wake sleeping dogs up," and some fourscore of weary soldiery were roused, without previous warning and amid torrents of frightful language, from their comfortable beds that they might take part in the enterprise.

Of the four sides to the great enclosure in which the asylum stood, one was formed by a railway line which ran between steep and, in some cases, precipitous grass-grown or scrub-grown banks.

And down what was probably the steepest point came the beleaguering band an hour later in the darkness, guided, as far as that was humanly possible, by an anxious officer, whose remarks, hastily ejaculated at intervals, spoke each of a peril to be avoided.

"For the love of God don't drop your rifle on the railway line. It'll raise the dead. Clutch on to that branch. The bank is as steep as a house wall." The warrior hesitated, a dark chasm gaping beneath him, water at the foot of it.

"Now spring over the ditch lightly; don't tumble into it."

They did it very badly, for a rifle and a tin helmet are serious encumbrances; the marvel is that they did it at all without some clatter of iron on iron, or steel on steel, that might have awakened not only the inmates of the asylum, but of the whole surrounding world.

And just as they had finished slithering down the slimy precipice, and Croft—for it was he—was collecting and arranging his band of aspirants for the honours of Chasseurs Alpins, the officer commanding the investing force arrived on the scene.

His idea, he said, was that, to exclude even the smallest loophole of escape, all the troops should reach their posts simultaneously. There was, he added, had they known it, a beautiful path through the fields above the railway embankment that would have led them straight to the lowest point of descent.

But they had not known it. For the preliminary reconnaissance of the officer and his friends on the preceding morning was fraught with the danger born of the suspicion of chance onlookers, and was thus per-

force superficial. However, twenty minutes afterwards, they were all neatly arranged in the prescribed sentry groups of six men to a post along the beat, and prepared for spending their seven hours' vigil in the exhilarating occupation of standing or sitting among the leafless and sodden blackberry bushes, or on steep swards of soaking grass.

This done, Croft went up and down to reconnoitre, and to ascertain that the cordon was complete and secure.

Fifty yards to the left, Wynterfold was leaning wearily against a high stone wall, and cursing the stringent regulations that prevented him from smoking. Croft suggested that he should come down to the spot where their beats met, as there was a bank there on which they could sit.

"What time do you think the search party will arrive?" said Croft.

"Oh, about eight, I suppose," said Wynterfold.

"Curse my luck forming part of this filthy cordon instead of being in the search. We shall be sitting here till at least one o'clock to-day, as they must take at least five hours if they're going to search right through that enormous place."

They sat down on the farthermost bank, whence they could see the twinkling of a hundred lights among the great pile of buildings opposite in the beleaguered sphere. It was about half an hour after three. They had still almost four hours to wait before they would see any daylight. And it is hard to know how they would have found them in any degree tolerable had not Croft had the fortunate misfortune to mislay his walking-stick, so that at intervals of visiting his posts he would return to the selfsame spot and clamber about in the grass, groping ineffectively.

Again and again they returned and renewed the quest. And then, as the dawn was breaking and the neighbouring picquet had been called in to assist, a soldier found it, like King Richard's crown, hanging on a thorn-bush.

It grew lighter and lighter. Daylight had come, and they could smoke their pipes, thank Heaven!

And even better than this, there was news of the arrival of cookers. The watch-worn soldiery pricked up their ears and indulged in eager speculation. The cookers had been seen, but they had missed their way, and were wandering all round the line of outposts before they arrived at the appropriate spot. There the watchers sated their hunger and gladdened their hearts with hot tea, a marvellous transformation resulting from this proceeding.

From silent and moody they became cheerful and talkative.

The agents of settled government were now both without and within. The search party had begun its search. The exponents of anarchy were, it

was hoped, still inside. But were they? That was the anxious question of the hour. The inhabitants of the houses round began pouring into the street, providing a host of difficult conundrums for the officers in charge of the beleaguering party. Was it possible to deny to the people their perfectly legitimate request to hear Mass? And yet who could say that any one of them might not have slipped out of that very suspicious priest's house that lay with its back opening on to the grounds of the asylum in the strip of road under Wynterfold's control? Meanwhile the search party went about everything with order and method. They searched the wards, they searched the chapels, the dining-rooms, hospitals, and laboratory; the library and the linen cupboards, the boys' school, girls' school, and mortuary, and many other places unrememberable, and after about four hours it seemed that their search would be in vain. Their faces fell; yet there were still the outbuildings. When they got to this point, the outposts were ordered to narrow the circle they had ringed round the asylum, and to draw in through hedges and wire fences, across the lawns and avenues and hayfields and cabbage patches up to a wall which divided off what we may call the business as distinguished from the domestic part of the institution. From this point was clearly visible a playground which had been improvised into a cage to suit the needs of the moment. It was bounded on all sides but one, which consisted of a high bare wall, by a massive iron railing quite impassable. In it roamed, played, chattered, moped, and squabbled a heterogeneous assortment of menfolk, old and young, reputable and disreputable, all herded together indiscriminately. Among them were not, it was believed, any of the notorious malefactors who were the object of the day's enterprise; but the "true blues," who reinforced the military picquets, passed the time in giving opinions as to which of this herd they considered candidates for summary execution. They pointed out such a one, the silent shifty-eyed man with the dark beard, for example, as a participator in the last dastardly killing affray, and averred with conviction that justice would be violated if he were not hanged.

Perhaps it would be, but the authorities regarded him as nothing more than a satellite of greater wrongdoers, and one of the first rules of policy is to lay the burden of penalty on ringleaders and spare the lesser fry. The searchers had, so it was rumoured, captured one or two of those whom they sought, thus proving beyond a doubt that their suppositions with regard to the asylum were not baseless. And they had put the warden, a potentate of mysterious habits and solitary disposition, in custody. One o'clock, and they were still

searching the outbuildings with no very startling results. Half-past one, and the troops were ready for their second meal. Wynterfold and Croft found some loyalist sympathisers who generously persisted in their sharing luncheon with them, which they did gladly but in a great hurry.

And then between two and three o'clock orders were received to close in.

"What has happened?" asked eagerly the members of the encircling party on reaching the open space before the great gate where an immense body of "military," "true blues," and officials of the institution crowded so thick that there was hardly a passage through.

Croft, on arriving at this scene, recognised almost all his old friends in the neighbourhood as having joined in the search. They looked tired and depressed, which surprised him, seeing that they had only been up since seven.

"The search has been a failure," said a comrade to him in an undertone. "I believe they as good as caught three of the rascals, but they slipped away, and are still being looked for. What the deuce have you been doing? Scrambling through hedges and ditches?"

Croft looked down at his coat, which was covered with mud and grass. The spectacle had been so absorbing that he was quite ignorant of his bedraggled appearance.

There was a stir suddenly among the crowd, and heads were turned towards the closed gate. Somebody was knocking. It was a question as to whether the gate should be opened, and quite as doubtful whether the solitary civilian who came in view on its opening should be granted permission to enter. He asked for the doctor. The doctor? Why on earth should he want to see the doctor, he whose glance and manner and appearance suffused such a radiance of health and high spirits? And just then Wynterfold, coming forward, recognised the now familiar figure. It was Tarragon.

"I wonder if I could see the officer in command," he said to the tall and imposing personage who was considering the case.

"You are speaking to him," and suddenly his expression changed, and he only just prevented himself from recognising the ubiquitous John in face of all the onlookers.

"Yes; it's all right. You can come in;" and then, so as not to be heard by any of the entourage, "we've finished our business here," and all with a manner signifying that it was a matter of complete indifference to him whether Tarragon saw the doctor or not.

VI.

"Oh! it's Dr Mahaffy you want to see," said one of the officials who was sitting in the gate-room near the entrance. "I'm sorry to say he's gone out; but it's back he'll be in less than half an hour. Perhaps you'll sit down and wait in the porter's lodge."

Tarragon sat down by the fire in the night-porter's room warming his hands. He wanted to see what was going on, but it was inadvisable that he should appear to be prying. Yet it was consoling to have a window through which he could observe even an infinitesimal part of what was happening outside. It was very little, but it was better than nothing. A few loungers were congregated in the porch, and more because they were the only people he could see than for any other reason, his attention was drawn to them.

They were not uninteresting as objects of study, particularly the nearest one of all, who stood where he could be well and clearly seen, standing upright with a good light behind him. He was a monk, a tall and sinewy monk, robed in a long gown and girded with a white cord, its tassels hanging decoratively in front of him. A skull-cap covered the back of his head, and underneath appeared a close-cut crop of hair of a shade that no one would have called auburn—it was too fiery for that—above a long ascetic face that ended in a straight fringe of beard, brighter even than the hair, and extending from ear to ear.

"There's a red and rusy one," thought Tarragon to himself. "I don't believe the regulations allow us to search monks. He seems very quiet. I wonder if he's feeling nervous."

If the theme of these meditations was feeling nervous, he gave little indication of it. He was contemplating the scene before him in the languid indifferent way that people have who, by their vocation, are untouched by the varied cares to be met along the highroads of life, and who merely stand and watch in all the corners of the world.

A little before the time when the encircling party had started out in the darkness of the morning, John Tarragon had gone to bed after a long talk with old Riordan. For the first time in his life Riordan, agitated by forebodings and gnawed with the sense of impending disaster, had done something that no one who knew him would have believed possible. To save his master he had betrayed his master's secrets. John had asked him whether he thought it possible that any one besides members of the "true blues" had seen Captain Macghahorn and himself when they were escorted into the police barrack on

the night of their visit to Faneless.

"No, it isn't that, your honour," Riordan replied; "but it wasn't the first time the captain's been there. He and Inspector Cully have been making up and down to one another these last three months. And they"—he made no further attempt to explain the word, though he pronounced it with significant emphasis — "they have had their eye on both of them this long while." It was during the course of this conversation that Tarragon was confirmed in his opinion that even Riordan, though he might have his suspicions of his being an officer, had no idea that he was normally stationed in Ireland. Thus the importance of his preserving his incognito, hitherto undiscovered, and the peril of taking any rash step that might reveal his identity.

These thoughts passed through his mind in a tenth of the time that it takes to write of them, while he still examined the features of the enigmatic monk. He wanted to speak to Wynterfold; but for the life of him he did not know how it could be done, without making too much of a demonstration. He racked his brains for a scheme; and while he still seemed as far as ever from any feasible device, his eye fell on a piano in a corner of the room. He remembered that Wynterfold had told him during their first meeting at Calgadoun of his passion for music, and how a friend of his, a gifted pianist, used sometimes to play to him to send him to sleep. He sat down at the piano and played the twelfth sonata of Beethoven, first softly, then louder. It did not matter much in the circumstances that the piano was somewhat out of tune. And fortune favoured him. A shadow passed the window swiftly. A figure crossed the threshold, and the person who was uppermost in his thoughts came into the room.

"Hullo!" said Wynterfold, "they tell me the search has not been entirely without result, as they have found some people here who were prisoners of Sinn Fein."

"Quick, shut the door. I hope you haven't drawn too much attention outside coming in here. Look at that monk!" He pointed.

Wynterfold looked at the monk for several seconds. "Well, just an ordinary monk, isn't he? I've seen dozens like him."

"No, I don't think he is an ordinary monk. I want to know more about him, and fairly soon. I say, do you think the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act empowers you to pull his beard?"

"What? as a suppliant? Why do you want me to pull his beard?"

"Because I don't believe that it's his own beard, or anybody else's. I've a very strong suspicion that if you do give it a pull, it will prove to be a false beard."

"Well, it certainly wouldn't be diplomatic, but it might be revelatory."

"Come now, you can play the diplomat to decide whether I am a good detective."

"It's a ticklish job to put on any one, and monks are immune from search."

"They are as a rule, but let this be the legitimate exception."

"And whether it's legitimate or not will be shown by the sequel."

"Never mind! try a tug at it. A man made his reputation by pulling out a rafter. You may make one by pulling off a beard."

Wynterfold went out and walked up to the monk. The man had a book in his hand, which he clutched to his bosom.

"Excuse my being inquisitive," said Wynterfold, "but may I see that book?"

Rather grudgingly the book was handed over. It was a note-book dealing with matters of philosophy and ethics. The names Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, occurred each of them several times. The monk explained that he was a student at the university.

"And do you have lectures on Sundays at your university?"

"We have a lecture for an hour every Sunday morning after Mass."

"And what do you study at these lectures?"

"Philosophy."

"Philosophy; not theology?"

"No; philosophy, Latin, and Greek."

"And do you take any interest in politics?"

"No; none whatever."

"You haven't any political opinions at all. What do you think, for instance, of the present state of Ireland?"

"Oh, I think that Ireland should hang on and try to get her own way."

"And do you approve of the means that are being used—the outrages?"

"No, I don't approve of shedding blood; but I should like to see my country free."

"What do you mean by 'free'?" said Wynterfold after a pause. Throughout the conversation he wished that Tarragon had been in his place. He could probably have managed it far better. "An independent State?"

"Yes, I do."

The monk spoke not exactly with a pure English accent, but with speech very far removed from the plain Irish brogue. Was it his Latin and Greek studies that were responsible for this? Otherwise he seemed quite a simple man. Perhaps he had lived in foreign countries and there consorted with people who spoke the same language, but who were not his own countrymen. He might have been to Rome and stayed there some time.

"A free and independent State," Wynterfold continued. "And what sort of figure would your people make divorced from the rest of us?"

"Oh, of course we should be a small country of no great importance. But I must be going now."

"Where? Back to the university?"

The monk made a quick movement—it was this that gave him away. Wynterfold, seized with a sudden impulse, laid hold of the hairs of his beard beneath his chin.

The man glared at him in utter amazement, and inwardly breathed a prayer that the gum would stick. But his prayer remained unheard, and it didn't. Following this discovery came the false wig. Close-fitting as it was, so as to deceive any but a searching scrutiny, with its accompaniment of skull-cap and tonsure, it fell as easy a prey to Wynterfold as the beard, and Balty, without excuse or palliation, and minus his black moustache, stood speechless and unvindicated before an astonished world.

Tarragon was almost the only person there to miss the last stages of this wonderful spectacle. Content that all would be well after witnessing the incident of the beard, he had turned away in order not to draw upon himself too much attention, and to explore another mystery that had been intriguing him. This was a small door hidden behind a screen in the farther corner of the room. There was something about its secretiveness that was particularly arresting. He had tried to open it, and had found that it was locked; he had knocked, and had received no answer. He had wondered whether, during their search, they had seen what was beyond it.

Then he looked out of the window to draw the notice of some one who could answer his question, and was pleased to see that the attention of the crowd was drawn towards the *ci-devant* monk, who was now the centre of interest. Whatever he did would be far less conspicuous now that they were all engrossed in another matter.

So he slipped outside, and, as if making a casual inquiry, said to one of the officers who stood near Wynterfold—

"Come and see the door?"

"What door?" he said quietly.

"Come along with me. I will show you."

They had the door opened, and went down the flight of stairs that lay beyond it. Others followed with an escort, and found a disused cellar. There was no wine there, but it was not empty nevertheless. It was the prison.

Some minutes later—maybe twenty—eleven people came up the staircase. Ten of them were of the type that you can see anywhere nowadays in one of the cages that are provided for Sinn Feiners—men of a low caste of feature, ugly, stooping most of them, unshaven, shifty-eyed, a mixture of craft and fear written on every line of their faces. They were the

kind of men whom Balty and his like had formerly led—or driven—two or three hundred strong, to attack twenty policemen, though now they were fallen into disfavour with the champions of freedom.

The eleventh was not of this type. He was tall and erect, and even coming as he did straight from his sordid captivity, neat and point-devise in every detail. His open dignity and manly bearing contrasted startlingly with his strange surroundings.

It was General Stewart, kidnapped a month ago.

Tarragon explained to Vardon, the Intelligence officer, in private that Robert had brought him as far as Killiney, and waited for him there. Could they help him on his way back? Certainly they could. If he didn't mind being squeezed into the General's car—he would very likely have to sit on the floor—they would be delighted to take him.

Dusk was creeping on. It was the hour the French call so fitly "between dog and wolf." And they must be away before darkness. A crowd waited at the other side of the barrier to watch the passing of the troops. The car, containing the driver, Vardon of the Intelligence on the seat in front beside him, the General with another officer and Tarragon inside, raced swiftly on and over the bridge where Robert and John had experienced their encounter with the police.

It was not altogether to their satisfaction when they reached Killiney to find that Robert was accompanied by Riordan, so that the car had to cope with six persons, Riordan sitting beside the driver, and the other five inside. This used up some time and all the remaining light, so that night had already come down when they were ready to start again—a night without moon, almost without stars, impenetrable.

Here and there, at rare intervals, the merest flicker amid the blackness, some light twinkled in a solitary homestead.

Setting out on an expedition, every one is alert, expectant, hoping for the best, yet preparing for the worst. Returning, especially after success, their caution relaxes, they tend to be gay, filled with a sense of security, over-confident, careless of precaution. So perhaps it may have been with this party, and then suddenly—

"Ping! whiz!" Shots rang out. And the General, calm and collected, the others slightly flurried: "Get out of the car," said he; "we're ambushed. Have any of you got revolvers?" Certainly somebody had, and no mistake. Riordan was firing wildly into the darkness in the direction from which the reports came.

They were out in the road: it is the best policy always. Though protected with steel, the car is the mark; and men moving in the dark make no target at all. The combatants

are seen only by the flash of their weapons.

Tarragon heard a fall and a groan. Groping on the ground round him—

"Who's that?" he called out. Then he almost stumbled over some one.

"It's I, Robert. By God! they've done me in this time. That letter wasn't a joke."

A woman came running across the fields from a house near by, screaming out some unintelligible jargon. As she came nearer, her words were audible.

"Blessed mother of God! and these be therrible times. And who is it they'd be murthering now, the cowardly spalpeens!"

"It's Captain Macghahorn, from Macghahorn," said Tarragon. "Is there a house near? Can you help us?"

"Macghahorn! Macghahorn!" she said. "Is it Captain Robert that 'd be lying there? Help you! God never help me again in anything if I'd not be helping your honour!"

They carried Robert into the house and laid him on a bed. He was weak with loss of blood and almost unconscious, but still able to recognise her. It was Mrs O'Rorke, the widow of the murdered constable. She told him the military had brought her there only an hour before to see her children. She had not dared, she said, to tell them, when they saw her in the asylum, that she was a prisoner.

The next day they brought him home. He would recover, but it would be a long time. His father had been released by an order from the General, and was there to receive his stricken son.

In the afternoon came Wynterfold. He had heard all the news, and more besides.

Tarragon asked eagerly if he knew anything of Mahaffy. He was sent for early that morning, but up to the present nothing had been seen of him.

"He was brutally done to death yesterday at midday," said Wynterfold. "We have caught the murderer."

"Do you know who he was?"

"Yes; he was a tallish man with grey eyes, black hair, and a squint."

A pang of self-accusation pierced through Tarragon that forced him to review the past in the sudden light that cured his blindness. He had regarded this man as a vain fool, who all through had been a single-hearted loyalist, faithful to the government that forsakes its supporters, and dying revealed himself a hero.

After a long pause, he said—

"And Robert; did they really want to kill him too?"

"They may have, but it was the General they were after. By some unaccountable means they knew that we had rescued him. Probably the post-office."

THE JOLLY ROGER.

BY DOUGLAS G. BROWNE.

"He sang to them of Pyracy, of Wrecks
and Death and Rum . . ."
—*Old Song.*

I.

WHEN Captain Kidd was sentenced to be hanged, it was directed that his body should be suspended in chains at Tilbury Point, "at such place on ye said Point where he may be seen most plaine by persons passing into, or out of, ye River of Thames." There was some idea in those days of making the punishment fit the crime; and a generation less squeamish than our own saw no impropriety in the spectacle of murderers, pirates, agitators, and other malefactors hanging in chains at conspicuous points about the countryside. Whether such examples really acted as deterrents seems doubtful. They were believed to do so, however. When piracy was at its height, in the first years of the eighteenth century, the river Thames was particularly well decorated in this manner. While the remains of Kidd still clattered and spun at Tilbury Point, many less noteworthy villains were similarly suspended elsewhere along both shores. The corpse of a gentleman called by the attractive but unconvincing name of Leary Gittor — actually one Louis Guittar or Guitton— diversified "the Isle of Doggs, over against Deptford," and a recent Session of Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery, held for the Admiralty at the Old Bailey (then described as "in the suburbs"), had easily outbid all these niggling expedients by sentencing no fewer than ten men, convicted of piracy, to be hanged together in chains "at the Point of Hope Ness, below Gravesend, near High Water Mark . . . as a greater terror to all persons from committing the like crime for the time to come." The Thames, indeed, must have offered in those days a cheerful welcome to the returning traveller. If, however, the latter had come from the West Indies or the Guinea Coast, the sight would have been stale; for there was no hanging of pirates even in this country on the wholesale scale adopted in the tropics and other parts especially victimised by these ruffians. When Roberts' people were captured in the *Royal Fortune*, fifty-two of them—a third of the crew—were summarily strung up within the flood-marks outside the gate of Cape Coast Castle.

The evil against which these measures were directed was, for a time, a very serious one. It has become strangely transfigured in what is called the popular mind (assisted by eminent novelists) during more recent and orderly generations, ignorant of how unpleasant it is to be robbed and set adrift in an open boat, if not murdered outright, somewhere in mid-ocean. Experiences during the late war may have cured a few beliefs in the romance of piracy. For, in truth, there was little romance in that profession. In its earlier form, as buccaneering, which differed ethically only in degree and not in kind from the later development, it could show at least some arresting figures like Drake or Morgan, some enterprises that were not wholly predatory in design nor brutal in execution, and some startling military exploits; but the genuine pirate of the early eighteenth century had few redeeming qualities. With rare exceptions, he was a mere vulgar ruffian—ignorant, cruel, and often extraordinarily stupid. The romantic and even chivalrous pirate of fiction is as big a myth as the legendary highwayman. In the nature of things he could not have existed: his friends would not have endured him for a moment. The real man was the direct ancestor of the engaging gentleman we have with us in such numbers to-day, who bludgeons old ladies and holds up defenceless post-office girls at the muzzle of a revolver. And it will be found that this type of scoundrel always becomes suddenly prominent, both in numbers and audacity, at certain definite periods of history—at the close, namely, of every prolonged and far-reaching war. For at such times, in addition to the ordinary criminals who have been absorbed into armies and navies, a peace lets loose also a formidable reinforcement of shiftless men changed by circumstance, rendered unemployable and reckless, inured to hardship and violence, callous, needy, and more or less expert in the use of weapons. For such men opportunities at sea have been cramped by steam and wireless telegraphy; but Europe is cursed ashore with thousands of them at this moment. And the heyday of genuine piracy—its few busy and predominant years, whose false glitter, refined by time and ignorance, still shines as a tale for schoolboys—arose immediately after the Peace of Utrecht in 1713.

For a generation before there had been warfare all over the globe. Adventurous men, who sought a more free and profitable life than any regular service had to offer, had manned the innumerable privateers sent out during the long conflict by all the belligerents. Licence, excitement, drink, and often money in abundance, were to be found by those who sailed under Letters of Marque and Reprisal. Even a man-of-war might win a prize worth taking. For twenty-five years and more,

with one short interlude, this halcyon age endured. And then there came a sudden end to it. The diplomatists contrived a peace. We all know how it was done. In the meantime, other honest gentlemen who, like the diplomatists, hankered after a maximum of booty with a minimum of blows, found their occupation gone. The privateers were become traders again. The men-of-war were laid up in ordinary, or employed on monotonous duties of police. Thousands of seamen of all nationalities, most of whom, it may be said, had been born and bred into a state of war and licence, were condemned at a stroke to a life of starvation or ill-requited toil. In that rough age it is not surprising that many of them took their fate into their own hands. In any case, there ensued at once the great outbreak of piracy.

II.

The maritime nations directly affected by the Peace of Utrecht were England, France, Spain, and the United Provinces. In the years that followed, the better-known pirates were either British or French, most of them (a doubtful compliment) being British. Captain Charles Johnson, in the preface to his 'General History of the Pyrates'—a book which, with all its imperfections, has the merit of being a contemporary narrative—makes the following observation on this point: "I cannot but take notice in this place," he says, "that during this long Peace I have not so much as heard of a Dutch Pyrate. It is not," he hastens to add, "that I take them to be honester than their neighbours." And he explains that this abstention of the Dutch from piracy may be attributed to the fact that the United Provinces owned a vast and lucrative fishery, actively encouraged by the Government, which at once absorbed all the men discharged from the fleet on the cessation of war. Also, the Dutch are a cautious and industrious race. England and France were less fortunately situated and less methodically governed; and they let loose upon a world that, like our own to-day, was struggling with the aftermath of conflict—a great horde of predatory undesirables.

Piracy as a profession is as old as mankind; and no doubt in the Stone Age there were fur-clad Teaches and Averys who plied their trade in coracles. But in writing of recent historical times, we have come to differentiate by various terms the recurring periods at which this pest, always active, assumed intolerable proportions, and provoked its victims to determined retaliation. Thus, when we talk of the corsairs of the Mediterranean, we mean

especially those who sailed under Barbarossa and his fellows. Gentlemen Adventurers is the sounding title given (in this country) to Drake, Hawkins, and other filibusters of the Tudor period. Buccaneering is a convenient term which describes the first great outbreak in the West Indies. In every case flat piracy would be a better description of the procedure; but in the same way the word pirate itself has come to be applied roughly to those men who rose to infamy in the Atlantic and the Caribbean after the buccaneers had had their day, and whose own eventual extinction seems—although it is not safe to prophesy—to mark the end of organised freebooting in the western seas. The story has been told a thousand times, but it is never stale; and it has perhaps a peculiar interest for us at the present day. For not only was the great outbreak of piracy a direct product of war, but in the ideals and methods of the pirates themselves, in their social and disciplinary routine, in their bombast, greed, squalor, and general incapacity, we see in miniature the perfect community as outlined by our modern reformers. The pirates were, in fact, the Bolsheviks of their day; but at least they had the honesty to refrain from cant about universal brotherhood and the love of man. They said precisely what they were and precisely what they wanted—the goods of other people.

The budding pirate almost invariably started his career on common lines. The crew of some small trading sloop or schooner would seize the ship, use her to capture one slightly larger, use the second again to capture a third, and continue this process until they had found one suited to their purpose. These progressive appropriations always supplied the original mutineers with reinforcements, voluntary or otherwise; and once they owned a craft of size and power, they could fill her with men from the great clearing-house of the West Indies. If some leader had not already been elected, or imposed himself by force of character upon the others, one was now chosen. A code of rules, essentially the same throughout the loose piratical confederacy but varying in detail, was drawn up. This code rested upon the simple assumption, beloved (in theory) of all pirates, Bolsheviks, socialists, and other reformers, that men were created equal, in the sense of

> "The ancient law, the simple plan,
> That he shall take who has the power,
> And he shall keep who can."

It was no more than the logical application of the sentiments uttered by every astute agitator from Cleon to Lenin. Its basis was community of goods,—other people's goods, of course. Except that the captain, by virtue of his office, was given one or two extra shares, all booty was divided equally

among the crew. The captain's office, again, was elective; he was merely the first among equals, and might be deposed at any moment. Leaders of real ability and character, like Roberts or Howel Davis, contrived to maintain their authority, and even to enforce a rude discipline afloat; but the smaller fry rose and fell at the caprice of their comrades in a manner familiar to all students of democracy.

Once a member of this Utopian society, every pirate gravitated inevitably to the West Indies. That vast congeries of islands, keys, and reefs, sparsely inhabited and almost uncharted, not only provided harbours, timber, food and negro labour, but was so situated in relation to the great trade routes that it was an obvious base. (In eastern waters, Madagascar played a similar part.) Ever since the Tudor adventurers had shown how easily the thing could be done, the whole circle of the Caribbean had been infested by pirates. The law-abiding colonists, harassed as well by perpetual legitimate wars, were weak in numbers, and were left almost entirely to their own resources by their home governments or proprietors, so that the feeble efforts made from time to time to abate this intolerable nuisance met with little success, the less because the instruments employed were so thoroughly unreliable. During the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth, not one of the governments concerned maintained in those waters anything approaching an adequate permanent naval force. The Spaniards, indeed, usually had a number of men-of-war stationed at Havana; but when these were not convoying the Plate ships, they seem to have remained at their anchors. The British Government was the most negligent of all. And, as a result, the only men who could be despatched to chastise the pirates were, as a rule, either pirates themselves, or became so immediately a credulous provincial Governor or committee of merchants put them on board a ship and gave them arms. Captain Kidd, it will be remembered, began his career with such timely help. The disease, therefore, was merely being propagated by its victims. Yet something must be done; and for generations a stream of complaints and appeals flowed back to Europe, to be stuffed away in pigeonholes and forgotten, although backed up earnestly at home by the big trading companies who suffered in pocket little less than the colonists themselves. The evil, meanwhile, continued to flourish exceedingly, in war and in peace. And then came the last straw, the great dispersion—the Diaspora of the reckless and irreclaimable after the Treaty of Utrecht; and the cry of the afflicted planters and traders in the islands became a bitter and continuous clamour which

aroused even officials in Europe, snug abed, to some sense of their responsibilities. In the story of this great epoch of piracy, however familiar it may be in outline, there is still much curious and interesting detail worth recalling.

III.

The great impulse to piracy given by the peace coincided, in the happy hunting-ground of the West Indies, with a special local attraction of some magnitude. In 1714 the Spanish Plate fleet was wrecked in the Gulf of Mexico. Several millions of pieces-of-eight, together with much other valuable property, went to the bottom; and at once the increasing swarm of needy proletarians in the islands pricked up their ears and began to evolve schemes for turning the event to account. The Spaniards, however, were as determined to save their year's revenue as the pirates were anxious to acquire it. Men-of-war from Havana cruised about the scene of the disaster, and presently salvage operations began, and were carried on for a year or two. Some millions of the lost pieces-of-eight were recovered and removed to safety. But in 1716 there was a vast fortune in silver, recently salved, and waiting to be transhipped back to Havana, lying in a storehouse on the adjacent coast under an inadequate guard of sixty men. This treasure was estimated to be worth £3,500,000. Among the pirates and others who, during the past two years, had waited in vain for a chance to assist in the good work, cursing and fretting while all this wealth was dredged up almost under their noses, there was a certain Captain Henry Jennings. Hearing of the recovered silver, he decided to make an attempt to secure some of it; and with the help of Charles Vane, a noted pirate, he secured three sloops and sailed for the Gulf. The Spaniards must have been caught napping, for no warships seem to have been about. Jennings and Vane overpowered the guard of the storehouse, carried away the silver, and captured, in addition, a ship with a further 60,000 pieces-of-eight and a rich general cargo. The pirates then sailed back to Jamaica, where they proceeded to dispose of their booty quite openly. This outrageous affair naturally made a great stir. We were at peace with Spain, and the stolen silver was government revenue. The victims of the raid followed Jennings to Jamaica and demanded instant redress from the Governor. The latter, however, seems to have been unable, or unwilling, to do anything; and presently Jennings and his men, having got rid of most of their plunder and been reinforced by several other

shiploads of ruffians, sailed away again—this time, we are told, definitely as pirates. We can only wonder what they supposed themselves to have been before.

Jennings now fell in with a number of refugee logwood-cutters from the Bay of Honduras. These people, who were known as Baymen, had also been involved in trouble with the Spaniards, who eventually drove them from their settlements, which, after all, were in Spanish territory; and being ruined and embittered, they were quite willing to assist Jennings to prey upon a capitalist society which did not appreciate their sterling qualities. It was decided, now that so considerable a fleet had been got together, to seize, in the first place, some island which would serve as a base for operations, much as the unemployable to-day propose to seize a town-hall or public library. The island of New Providence, in the Bahamas, was the unfortunate spot chosen for this purpose.

The Bahamas occupy an admirable strategic position, extending for hundreds of miles between the Florida peninsula and the island of Hayti, and thus controlling the Florida Channel, the direct entrance from the Atlantic to Havana and the Gulf of Mexico. They are one of nature's gigantic miracles, for, being built up of coral, they are still laboriously increasing in numbers and size, and total already nearly 700 islands or keys, guarded by a labyrinth of reefs not yet above water. It is said that the *Severn* frigate, cast away upon one of these in 1793, is now completely encrusted by the coral. To the eastward, the ocean bed falls to immense depths; but the intricate waterways among the islands are shallow, and there is only one safe harbour in the whole group—that of Nassau, on New Providence, famous as the depot for the blockade-runners during the American Civil War. In 1700, although a bar at the mouth permitted only ships of moderate draught to enter, the harbour of Nassau was said to be capable of holding 500 sail. It alone gave New Providence its importance, for the latter is one of the smallest of the habitable islands, being a little larger than the Isle of Wight. Most of the Bahamas, indeed, are insignificant in size, and all are very flat. The most respectable hill, on Cat Island, is 400 feet high. (Near to Cat Island, by the way, is Rum Key, which has a thoroughly piratical sound.) A feature of the group, common to most coral formations, is the almost complete absence of fresh water; but there is an extremely heavy rainfall, reaching 40 inches in the north, and on some of the islands this is collected by a highly useful type of mistletoe, which absorbs moisture like a sponge. The flora also include mahogany and American pitch-pine. There is food to be got in monotonous

abundance in the form of turtle and fish, while for an occasional relish there is the crocodile, which, usually a lover of sweet water, has somehow found his way, like the pirates, to the Bahamas.

The islands were, of course, British, and at the close of the seventeenth century were owned by certain lords proprietors, among whom were the Earls of Craven and Bath, and Lords Berkeley, Ashley, and Carteret. The scandalous way in which these gentlemen neglected the welfare of their property provoked constant and bitter complaints from the settlers; and at length the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations were moved to address Queen Anne on the subject. They told her that neither stores, arms, nor ammunition had been sent out by the lords proprietors for twenty years. The settlers, ruined by a long war and by the increasing audacity of the pirates, were defenceless and despairing. Of 150 white families in New Providence, only twelve remained. The solitary fort on this island, built to guard the important harbour, was crumbling to pieces; and its guns, having been spiked by the French and Spaniards when they raided the Bahamas in 1703, had never been repaired or replaced. And now, the Commissioners concluded, a final and most discreditable infliction was added to these others. New Providence, this valuable outpost, the key to those waters and a perpetual sentry, if suitably fortified, over the great trade route through the Florida Channel, had actually been seized by a gang of pirates, who talked loudly of making it a second Madagascar.

This was in the autumn of 1716. The Commissioners' address, backed by petitions from influential merchants, had some effect. But in those days questions of colonial policy—and, indeed, of national defence as well—were still regarded as matters for semi-private effort. The Government did as little, and that as ungraciously, as possible. We had not learnt much since the days of the Armada; and no doubt in the case of the Bahamas the lords proprietors were influential persons, awkward to offend. It would seem the obvious course to have sent a small regular force to the islands, under orders to expel the pirates and leave a garrison. The lords proprietors might have been put on board one of the ships to gain a little first-hand knowledge of the property they were neglecting. Of course, nothing so sensible was done; and a most extraordinary procedure was adopted instead. There was living at this time in idleness the well-known Captain Woods Rogers, who had made his name and fortune under Letters of Marque in the late war, when, with the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers (William Dampier being master of the *Duke* and general pilot to the

expedition), he anticipated Anson's exploit by sailing round the globe and capturing an Acapulco treasure-ship. Here was a man capable of doing the work which the government and the lords proprietors should have done themselves. The latter graciously allowed Rogers to rent the Bahamas from them, thus making sure that they would not lose money. He was then commissioned as Governor with the rank of Colonel, and all necessary powers (on paper) for suppressing piracy, was given two vessels, and was left to shift for himself without further help. It is true that four other men-of-war of 40 guns, three of 30, and six smaller craft, were also detailed for service in the West Indies against the pirates; but it does not appear that this squadron sailed till long after Rogers, or that he had any control over it when it arrived. And he had his own difficulties to contend with before he could start. He had to find everything himself, and he met with the usual obstructions and delays. He was commissioned as Governor in 1717; it was not until the summer of the following year that he arrived with his two ships at Nassau, to discover for himself what had been happening in the meantime to his new possessions.

IV.

And what, in the meantime, had been happening on New Providence?

Jennings and Vane, with their assortment of cosmopolitan ruffianism, reached the unhappy island toward the end of 1716. There were, of course, already pirates on the spot; the settlers had long been powerless to oppose their use of the harbour, and it seems to have been at this time that one Thomas Barrow, ex-mate of a Jamaica brigantine, fastened upon the little colony with a band of fifty deserters, who looted, burnt, and ravished. They were waiting for a ship "to go a-Pirating"; and Barrow, who called himself Governor of the island, was expecting a reinforcement, "the Flying Gang," of 500 or 600 men. This Flying Gang may well have been Jennings' party. We can imagine, therefore, the feelings of the few terrorised and beggared white families still living at Nassau when ship after ship dropped anchor in the harbour and discharged fresh hordes of pirates. It was now that most of the remaining planters, abandoning everything they possessed, slipped away while they could to Barbados or Jamaica. New Providence, and with it in effect the whole Bahamas, covering 700 miles of ocean, was as wholly at the disposal of the pirates as ever Tortuga had been at that of the buccaneers.

And now, from the ends of the Atlantic and the Caribbean, from Campeachy, from Honduras, from all the islands of the Antilles and the swamps and rivers of the Main, a great flock of ships under the Jolly Roger came crowding into the harbour of Nassau. It was such a gathering of these sinister craft as was never seen before or after. Before long there were upwards of 2000 pirates roaring, drinking, and ravaging about the island when they were not pursuing their trade at sea. Among their leaders were nearly all the "romantic" figures idolised by Tom Sawyer and his like. In addition to the pioneers, Vane and Jennings, Benjamin Hornigold was there, and with him his promising pupil, Edward Teach, or Thatch, the celebrated Blackbeard. England, Martel, Fife, Bellamy, Winter, Burgess, Cocklyn, Rackam, Nicholas Brown, "Major" Penner, Oliver de La Bouche—these are some of the better-known of those who made the island their headquarters. It must have been an astonishing place during the two years of this occupation. One can picture the tropical sun beating down upon the deserted plantations and the white coral sand, upon the keys that lay around, and upon the water, intensely blue, of the shallows between; beating also upon the filth and tawdry finery, the drinking and gaming, singing and fighting, the continual bustle in the crowded anchorage as some dark ship weighed and put out to sea or came sailing in with a hold full of booty. There must have been a frequent firing of the customary shotted salutes when a newcomer arrived, followed by a fresh orgy of drunkenness. Women were there on the island, and no doubt Teach was accompanied by some of his fourteen wives. Mary Read and Anne Bonny, that redoubtable pair of amazons, are likely to have come with Rackam's ship, on which they served. And among the forgotten rank and file who turned New Providence into a place of chaotic squalor and debauchery, there must have been one picturesque figure who is dear to all of us—Mr Israel Hands of 'Treasure Island.' He was one of Teach's men, and was afterwards disabled through his commander's well-known pleasantry of firing a brace of pistols at random beneath his cabin table when guests were drinking with him. Hands, on one of these festive occasions (which must have palled after a time on those honoured by invitations), was shot in the knee and crippled. He seems to have made allowances for his captain's little weakness, however, for he was still with Teach in the latter's last fight against Maynard's sloops, and was among the few who got away. Captured afterwards in Bathtown, where he was hiding, he escaped hanging, perhaps on account of his disablement; and he is last heard of in 1724, when

he was in London "begging his bread."

Hands was more fortunate than most of his associates whose names have come down to us. A time arrived when the common sort were dangling in scores on the West Indian islands and along the Guinea Coast, or were sailing mournfully in fetters to Execution Dock to meet a like fate by the Thames; and those who still think of adopting piracy as a profession (a large class, it would seem, in these days) might reflect with profit upon the fate of the leaders, some of whom we have seen triumphant in New Providence. They make a tragic list, which seems to prove that communism—another word for piracy, and identical in origin—is not a happy form of government for any one concerned. Teach—to use the name by which he was best known—was, of course, killed in action; so was Penner, and so was Bartholomew Roberts, a bigger man than either. Howel Davis, as enterprising and perhaps even more able than Roberts, fell in an ambuscade on the island of Del Principe. Fife, Anstis, Evans, and Phillips were killed by their own men. Hornigold, Williams, Burgess, and Oliver de La Bouche were lost at sea. Winter and Brown surrendered to the Spaniards, and their fate is doubtful, as is that of Farrington Spriggs and the yet more infamous Low. Martel vanished in the forests of Santa Cruz after his defeat by the *Scarborough*. Lowther was found dead, apparently by his own hand. Mary Read died in prison. Stede Bonnet, the gentleman pirate, Vane, Worley, Cocklyn, Sample, Rackam, Kennedy, Roche, Upton, Gow, and many more, were hanged. The almost fabulous Avery, who was said to have married the Great Mogul's daughter, died penniless at Bideford at a time when a play, 'The Successful Pyrate,' based upon his career, was running in London. Jennings, a half-hearted rogue, surrendered to the authorities in time, and may have survived to die in his bed. But of all these contemporaries, who for a few years virtually ruled the Central American waters, only England seems to have made anything approaching a successful business of his career. He retired eventually with his gains to enjoy the congenial society of Madagascar. For the rest, a long vista of gallows and forgotten graves were their sole reward, and a crop of haunting but fallacious stories of buried treasure their sole gift to later generations of social innovators.

But no shadow of this disastrous future clouded the early days at New Providence. Business was brisk, drink and money were plentiful, and the inevitable quarrels among the confederates did not as yet shake the sense of power they drew from their numbers and apparent strength. The trade routes were at their mercy, and the small and scattered settlements

on the nearer islands and along the Florida and Carolina seaboard were terrorised into passive complicity. Often, indeed, the pirates received active help both from private and official sources. Thus Teach struck up a friendship, mutually beneficial, with Charles Eden, the Governor of North Carolina. After his fight with the *Scarborough*—one of the most energetic of the few British warships then on the station—Teach and a few confederates abandoned their vessel and comrades, and, with most of the latter's share of booty as well as their own, made their way to Bathtown. Here Eden, no doubt for a consideration, went through the farce of granting them a pardon, and then proceeded to fit them out with another ship—one previously captured by Teach himself. A Court of Vice-Admiralty, held for the purpose, condemned the vessel as a Spanish prize. She was actually British, and, in any case, we were at peace with Spain. "These proceedings," as Captain Johnson acutely observes, "shew that Governors are but men." Blackbeard's downfall arose directly from this conspiracy with Eden; for the latter's persistent connivance at the pirate's outrages drove the traders of Carolina to appeal to Spottiswood, the Governor of Virginia, who organised the little expedition which at length destroyed Teach and his crew in 1718.

That year may be said to mark the beginning of the end of this epoch of organised piracy. The thing was becoming intolerable, for the number of ships lost annually in those waters was running into hundreds, and many small ports were under perpetual blockade. As we have seen, while the pirates themselves, more reckless and improvident than even the ordinary seamen, still caroused and wrangled on the Bahamas, giving no thought to a possible Nemesis gathering her Furies beyond the horizon, in England, at long last, the first halting steps were being taken toward their suppression. Woods Rogers, in face of much apathy and actual obstruction, was preparing to assume his Governorship. A royal proclamation was issued, offering pardon to all pirates who, having been guilty of no felonious act since 5th January 1717, surrendered by the same day in the following year; and with it came a tariff of rewards for all who killed or captured the recalcitrant. It was a copy of this document, sent across the Atlantic long before Rogers sailed, and found on board a prize at sea, which gave to the confederates on New Providence their first warning of the coming storm. Something like a panic seems to have ensued. Most of the outlaws were British, and they must have known that their countrymen, however slow and fumbling in taking up some necessary task long overdue, were certain, once started, to carry it out with obstinate thoroughness. The

whole British Navy, although as yet lying idle in home ports, was in fact behind Woods Rogers and his two ships; and the more able among the pirates realised that they had challenged an irresistible antagonist. A general pirate council was called on New Providence. It must have made a remarkable and picturesque scene, but it produced nothing but squabbles and noise. At once, however, the weaker brethren began to look to their safety. Jennings, with 150 men, slipped away and surrendered to the Governor of the Bermudas, and many others followed this example. It is true that when no immediate action appeared to follow the proclamation, a great number of these deserters returned to their old ways—in the words of their contemporary historian, "like the Dog to the Vomit"; but the seeds of fear and dissension had been sown. Nothing else can explain the fact that Rogers, with his negligible means, was able to make any headway at all when he did at length arrive. For, with a reasonable degree of combination, the pirates could have destroyed him.

He sailed into the harbour of Nassau in May or June 1718. He had no regular landing force of any kind, merely two armed ships indifferently manned, and his own character and reputation. Some idea of the pirates' strength may be gathered from the statement that even now, after deducting the renegades and those who were at sea, there were still more than 2000 of them, under Teach and Vane, on the island. Nassau anchorage has two entrances, on either side of a small key; and as Rogers sailed in by one opening, Vane escaped by the other, attempting no more than a few shots at long range. Teach seems to have withdrawn into the interior, whence he soon fled to the Carolina coast and the benevolent neutrality of Governor Eden, and so met his death. Thanks to this pusillanimous display, Rogers had secured the vital harbour without striking a blow. But this was all he had done or could do; he might hold Nassau, but until he was provided with some troops he could not overrun New Providence. As it was, there being few or no settlers left to help him, he was driven at once to the expedients which had proved so worthless before. Some 400 of the pirates, deserted by their leaders and with their retreat cut off, surrendered to wait for a better day; and having first set them to build him a fort, the new Governor then formed them into companies for the suppression of their fellows. A sloop, captured in the harbour, was sent away to Jamaica for stores under the command of one of them named John Augur. The companies, of course, were little better than useless, the men deserting freely. Augur, in the meantime, having met some of his old friends at sea, rejoined them again. His luck,

however, was out; a gale blew him back to the Bahamas, and Rogers hanged him on New Providence with all his crew save one, who turned King's evidence.

The Governor's difficulties were enormous; but this and other examples of his determination and energy were so far effectual that he was able slowly to extend his operations beyond the immediate neighbourhood of Nassau. Some of the settlers were returning, while the pirates left on the island were thoroughly cowed, and were now escaping in great numbers. They only escaped, however, to resume their activities elsewhere. Their base had been captured; but piracy in general was as rife as ever, and the keys and shallows of the Bahamas were still its headquarters. Woods Rogers was left entirely without support from home, and he was quite unable to control single-handed a fraction of his seven hundred islands. Nor does he seem to have received any material help from the other colonial Governors, who perhaps, when they were not, like Eden, themselves conniving at piracy, had their own hands full enough. The British Government was always fairly impartial in its disregard of its country's dependencies. It did little or nothing for any one of them.

By this time, it is true, the persistent complaints from the entire West Indies, from New England and the southern American colonies, and from influential quarters at home, had impelled the cabinet to do one obvious thing. The naval force in American waters was being strengthened, and something like a systematic hunt for pirates was beginning, although in so vast an area of water the hunt was likely to be a long one with the few small and fast vessels available. Helped indirectly by this activity, the Governor of the Bahamas was able gradually to set his house in order. The labyrinth of shallows and keys ceased to be a secure haven for piracy. But Rogers' first term of office lasted only for three years. Wearied of his thankless task, and unpopular with the incompetents at home who resented his bitter complaints of their neglect, he resigned or was recalled in 1721. A nonentity named Phenney succeeded him, and seems to have been thoroughly inefficient. In 1729 Rogers was induced to return to the Bahamas. By this date the good work he had started was well on its way. Piracy had definitely entered upon its decline. It existed, of course, for another century in those waters, but the big men whose names and exploits we remember today were all dead by 1729. The suppression of their imitators was become already merely one of the endless but normal police duties of the Navy. It is commonly said that the Royal Navy crushed piracy; and this is true. But the planters and traders of the West Indies knew

that the first great blow had been struck many years earlier, when Rogers, with his two little ships, drove Vane and the redoubtable Blackbeard from the harbour of Nassau.

V.

In conclusion, let us turn back again for a moment, and see what manner of men these pirates were, how they looked and talked and fought. The story of their most startling feats, and of how many of them died, used to be familiar to every schoolboy. Things appear to be different now. Even the ubiquitous cinematograph, which specialises in the work of tedious American burglars, has overlooked this superb field for picturesque drama.

We have seen that a great majority of the leading pirates were of British birth. Of these, again, a surprising proportion, including the most able, were Welsh. Modern readers may be left to draw their own conclusions as to the significance, or otherwise, of this fact. (In these days, of course, all the leading pirates are Jews.) Both Howel Davis and Bartholomew Roberts were Welshmen, as were Evans, Phillips, Williams, and many more. Teach came from Bristol, which is much the same thing. Davis and Roberts were men of real character and ability, who in a regular service in war-time might have gone far. The former was given his first ship by England. He excelled in stratagems, and his peculiar daring is shown in his most successful outrages, which were carried out against the Portuguese, and on land—an element not favoured for business purposes by the average pirate. Davis, indeed, was the last of the old buccaneer school, and might have sacked cities had he survived longer. Quite early in his career he captured the Portuguese fort of St Jago on the Guinea Coast. He then sailed for Gambia Castle, disguised himself as a respectable merchant, and, with his master and doctor, was received in state by the Governor. At a given signal his men rushed the fort, but the booty found there was disappointing. With the help of Cocklyn and Oliver de La Bouche he took the castle of Sierra Leone, and soon after, at Accra, captured the Governor and £15,000 in gold. But at the island of Del Principe, where he passed off his ship successfully as a British man-of-war, his luck failed him. He proposed to seize the Governor and hold him to ransom; but his plan was betrayed by a negro who swam ashore. Landing with a small party next morning, Davis walked into an ambush on his way to the Governor's house, and was shot dead.

On his ship at this time was Bartholomew Roberts, who had been taken in a prize, of

which he was second mate, and induced to join the pirates. Davis having been killed, his crew held a council to choose a new captain, it being essential to select a courageous man, as one of them said, "while we are sober." From this it appears that they were not often in that melancholy condition. Davis's officers (as we may call them) were in the habit of prefixing the title of "Lord" to their names. One of these, "Lord" Dennis, now proposed Roberts for the vacant post, and the latter was instantly elected. As he does not seem to have been a member of this local and ephemeral nobility, his promotion speaks strongly for his merits and popularity. His first acts as captain were the seizure of the fort of Del Principe and the bombardment of the town, in retaliation for the killing of Davis.

Roberts, in fact, like his predecessor, was a man of brains and audacity. He is said to have been temperate and humane, although this last quality is not apparent in some of his actions. Captain Johnson gives a code of rules drawn up by him for his crew; and if these are authentic, they show that he enforced at sea a discipline of a kind unusual on pirate craft. Article III. forbids any man "to game at Cards or Dice for Money" on board ship. Article IX. lays down that "no man is to talk of breaking up his Way of Living, until each shall have shared £1000." Article XI. shows us who were, perhaps, the hardest worked of all a pirate company. It permits the musicians to have a rest on the Sabbath, "but the other Six Days *and Nights*, none without Special Favour." What would the Amalgamated Society of Musicians (or whatever it calls itself) say to such hours in these days? Yet this was in the ideal community, where all, in theory, were equal. Roberts seems to have proved too strict for the liking of his fellows, and at the time of his last action and death the discontented were plotting against him. Most of them were hanged soon after, which put an end to all their grievances.

The most striking example of Roberts's daring methods is given in the following story. Off the South American coast, with a single ship, he fell in with a Portuguese merchant fleet of forty-two sail, convoyed by two ships of the line of 70 guns. Roberts mixed with the crowd of vessels undetected, boarded and captured the nearest after dark, and forced her captain to point out to him the richest ship in the convoy. Then, in broad daylight, almost under the guns of two big men-of-war, he ran alongside his quarry, secured her, and put a prize crew on board. She was found to sail slowly, however, and as Roberts was determined not to lose her, to cover her escape he calmly lay-to and waited for the nearest 70 to attack him. His bold

attitude was enough. The man-of-war sheered off from a vessel of half her power, and the pirate sailed away in triumph with his valuable prize, which carried a cargo of sugar, skins, and tobacco, much jewellery (including a diamond cross for the King of Portugal), and 40,000 gold moidores.

In the course of his career as a pirate, Roberts swept the whole Atlantic. Flying his own peculiar black flag, he sailed into Trepassy Bay, Newfoundland, and sank twenty-one out of twenty-two ships there. He pillaged and destroyed another nine or ten on the Banks. Then he is found thousands of miles to the south at Whydah, of evil memory, where he took eleven ships and, it is said, burnt one on which there were still eighty slaves, trapped between the flames on board and the sharks in the bay. The story of how Chaloner Ogle, in the *Swallow*, 60, eventually found and killed him in Lopez Bay, on 10th February 1722, is well known. Roberts, in the *Royal Fortune*, was actually at sea when another of his ships, the *French Ranger*, was captured by the *Swallow*, in the same waters, two days earlier. Returning with a prize, the *Neptune* of London, Roberts was breakfasting on "Solomon-gundy and beer," in company with Hill, the *Neptune's* master, when the *Swallow* was seen standing into the bay. Many of the pirates were drunk, and the ship was not got under way until it was too late. Trying to slip by the man-of-war, the *Royal Fortune*, which was hopelessly outclassed, was taken aback, and in the action that followed a grape-shot took Roberts in the throat. He sat down on the tackle of a gun, and died while one of his men was upbraiding him for a coward. In obedience to his orders, his body was thrown overboard before the ship surrendered.

Roberts is described as a tall black man of nearly forty. He appeared on the poop of the *Royal Fortune* in his last fight wearing a rich crimson damask waistcoat, breeches of the same, a red feather in his hat, a gold chain with a diamond cross round his neck, and two brace of pistols hanging at the end of a silken sling. He always flew his own particular version of the Jolly Roger. On the black ground, instead of the usual skull and cross-bones, there was a figure of Death holding an hour-glass, with the cross-bones in his other hand, and a bleeding heart below. He also hoisted, as a Jack, a second black flag showing a man with a flaming sword standing on two skulls, beneath which were the letters A. B. H. and A. M. H., short for "A Barbadian's Head" and "A Martinican's Head." Roberts had some especial prejudice against these islands. Altogether, he must have been a picturesque as well as a most able ruffian.

People have forgotten Roberts, however, who will

always remember Teach, although that grotesque person had not a quarter of the former's ability. The conventional pirate, as depicted in those delightful pictures which one used to buy for a penny plain or twopence coloured, was based on descriptions of Blackbeard. But he was little more than a roaring and extravagant blackguard, famous because of his beard, his dress, his armoury of pistols, his ferocious tricks and language, and all the rest of his theatrical stock-in-trade. He seems at least to have possessed courage, for he received twenty-five wounds before Maynard was able to cut off his head and lash it to his bowsprit. With his last ship is associated the mysterious story of "the extra man"—the supernumerary and unknown member of the crew, seen by all, who vanished when approached. The ominous character attributed to this spectre by the superstitious was justified in Teach's case.

Few of the other pirate leaders can, or need be, noticed here. England, who at one time was deposed by his crew and marooned on Mauritius, was a man of parts. He fought one terrific battle with the *Cassandra*, a merchantman, off Madagascar, only capturing her when she had been deserted by two consorts and had lost nearly forty of her small crew. Such fights were rare in the history of piracy. Avery, who was swindled out of his fortune by some Bideford merchants, did little to merit his great reputation. For sheer brutality, none of them could surpass Low, who tortured men, cut off their lips and boiled them before their eyes, and massacred whole crews. Such another was Far rington Spriggs, whose inappropriate name is his only recommendation. The case of Stede Bonnet, a prosperous planter in Barbados, who suddenly caught the fever and ran amok, remains one of the curiosities of history. He worked for a while with Teach, was pardoned, relapsed and was caught, escaped from Charleston and was recaptured, and so in the end was hanged. He must have made a capable pirate, for a price of £700 was put upon his head. Education tells, even in such professions.

Of the lesser men, the lower-deck ratings of piracy, who never rose to command ships but fought and drank and gambled their lives away in squalid obscurity, we only know that they were much like other irreclaimables. New Providence, during their occupation, would have called like home to members of the Third International. There was very little of the grand manner about them, and still less of the conventional romance. When they were caught, they usually acted after their kind—whining, informing, and praying for mercy to the foot of the gallows. A few there must have been who joined the ranks from love of adventure, and occasionally we hear of men of a better breed,

men who fought hard and showed the same desperate courage to the end. When Woods Rogers strung up Augur's crew on New Providence, the pinioned men were adjured to repent and turn their minds to another world; whereupon one of them cried, "Yes, I do heartily repent; I repent we had not done more mischief, and that we did not cut the throats of them that took us, and I am extremely sorry that you a'nt all hanged as well as me!" The rest then cried out, "So do I! So do I!" They were soon after turned off, without making any other dying speeches, except that Dennis Macarty told the crowd how some friends of his had often said he would die in his shoes, but that he would make them liars, and so kicked his shoes off. And beside this rather grim joke we can place the unexpected turn of wit shown, in most discouraging circumstances, by Mr William Main, boatswain of Roberts's *Royal Fortune*. Main happened to be on board the *French Ranger*—possibly in command of her—when she was captured by the *Swallow*. At the last moment, some desperate man fired a store of powder in the *Ranger's* steerage, and the explosion blew Main out of the stern gallery into the sea. When picked up, blackened and singed, he cried furiously, "By God! they are all mad or bewitched, for I have lost a good hat by it!" An officer who heard him asked him what a hat signified to him in his present predicament. "Not much," answered Main, the *Swallow's* men being engaged at that moment in pulling his clothes off. He added that he wished he was with Roberts. "No doubt on't," the officer said. "By God!" Main rejoined, finding himself now completely stripped, "that's the naked truth!"

And so we may leave him and his kind. Many of them found at Execution Dock or on West Indian beaches that happy despatch to which they had so often assisted others. Leaders and lower deck alike, they were an unmitigated scourge, and their acts had no justification of the kind to which their predecessors, the Gentlemen Adventurers and, in a lesser degree, even the buccaneers, could make some claim. But it is silly, when we rightly class them as criminals, to pretend that their imitators to-day are merely political cranks. The Bolshevik, or communist, or Sinn Feiner, or whatever else he calls himself, is simply a pirate, and, like the pirate, is in his extreme form one of the waste products of the reaction after such an upheaval as a great war. Comparing a portrait of Lenin or of Michael Collins with one of the twopence coloured prints of Blackbeard, one could say, with Mr Hilaire Belloc—

> "If only he dressed decently, and let his whiskers grow,
> How like the Great Baboon would be to Mr So-and-So."

THE VOYAGE HOME.

BY ALAN GRAHAM.

CHAPTER VI.

THE three days from Alexandria to Malta—bear in mind that the *Bedouin* was a ten-knot tramp—served to shake the passengers into the little groups of kindred sympathies that are usually formed aboard ship.

There was the smoke-room party, consisting of Scrymgeour, Murray, and Charlie Conliffe, who kept the deck-steward constantly on the run staying the pangs of their unquenchable thirst. Most of the men drifted in occasionally for cock-tails before lunch or dinner, but these three made it their abiding-place, only coming out for meals. Indeed, the time came when meals ceased altogether to attract Charlie Conliffe—but that comes later.

The two Scotch builders undoubtedly hastened his downfall. They would have repudiated angrily and in all good faith the notion that they were drunkards, but they were certainly large and constant consumers of whisky. It seemed to have very little effect upon them, however. They remained stolid, dour, taciturn, and respectable members of society on what would have brought most men to the verge of unconsciousness. Perhaps towards night they seemed a little more stolid, a slightly glazed look might have been noticed in their eyes, but they would rise with their, "Weel, guid-nicht tae ye a'," and walk firmly and steadily down the companion to their cabin.

The pace was too fast for Charlie Conliffe, seasoned toper as he was. He refused to fall behind, to be left out of any round of drinks ("My mother never bred a jibber"), with the result that quite early in the day he was maudlin ("Jus' a l'il bit sozzled, ol' boy"), and might be seen at intervals overcome by noisy slumber in a corner of the smoking-room.

Joan Conliffe saw even less than usual of her husband, but it cannot truthfully be said that she missed him. In the apparently haphazard placing of deck-chairs, which really amounts to a staking of claims aboard ship, she found herself seated upon the left of Peter Brown. On his right was Frank Honiton, beyond whom, again, were Jocelyn Upton and her mother. The Pilths made a group by themselves, separated by just sufficient yards to indicate their sense of their own

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importance. The delicate manœuvring of the Cohun Balkes for a place in the sun (Balke longed to cultivate the acquaintance of the owner of such magnificent diamonds), which ended in their complete discomfiture, afforded Peter Brown, who unostentatiously watched every move in the game, a deal of quiet amusement. By the end of the second day out, the Cohun Balkes had an isolated post at the opposite end of the line, and that without any plain-spoken rudeness on the part of Sir Evan Pilth.

The Honourable Steven Corris walked the deck the greater part of the day—it was the best means of killing time that he knew of—but had a deck-chair to the left of Mrs Conliffe, into which he would drop at intervals. He was an inveterate gossip and mischief-maker, and notwithstanding the lack of sensational happenings (at this stage of the voyage), never failed to produce some fresh item of news. It might only be the discovery that the bos'un owned a glass eye, or that Garry the chief steward was the image of a photograph he had once seen of a convicted burglar; but the Honourable Steven Corris would dilate upon it until he had convinced himself that the bos'un's glass eye would in the end result in the wreck of the vessel, or the chief steward's alleged criminal tendencies break out in an epidemic of cabin robberies. Born on a lower plane, the Honourable Steven would probably have developed into a successful half-penny journalist.

It was astonishing how quickly Peter Brown grew to be upon terms of friendly intimacy with Joan Conliffe. A lonely bachelor of close upon forty, roaming the country and the continent on the track of the law-breaker, sees little of the social side of life. Indeed, it is doubtful if the detective had talked with a woman outside of the criminal or the landlady classes in the past twenty years of his life.

With Joan Conliffe his early shyness quickly wore off. She did not talk to him much. She had not the gift—if it be one—of small talk ; but he felt that she was an understanding woman, sympathetic and motherly of mind, and to his own astonishment he found himself talking easily to her in the intervals of reading and watching the simple amusements that served to pass the days away.

Captain Spedley was an expert at a form of deck-croquet that he had himself invented. He soon had Honiton and Jocelyn Upton involved in its intricacies, and the enthusiasm spread until even Sir Evan Pilth forgot his dignity sufficiently to enter the game.

Mostly Peter Brown smoked his pipe and watched, though occasionally Honiton would inveigle him into the game to make up a fourth.

There is no doubt that already Frank Honiton was the most generally popular man on the ship. It was at his instance

that Sir Evan Pilth entered the croquet game; it was he who suggested and managed the little sweepstake on the day's run; it was he who was appealed to when any one had an idea for some new form of amusement.

Yet he did not push himself forward. He was never obtrusive, but merely naturally genial and attractive. Murray and Scrymgeour brightened up, and grew almost talkative when he drifted into the smoking-room and had a drink with them before meals. After dinner each evening they tried to tempt him to join their stolid drinking party, but he had always an excuse and a genial smile.

The only person who did not approve of him was the Honourable Steven Corris. He was not satisfied with Honiton's early education. He had questioned him as to his school, and Honiton had been reticent. Now no one could be a gentleman unless he was a public-school boy. It was an unfortunate position for the Honourable Steven. Intensely talkative, and dependent upon others to exorcise his boredom, he had no one his equal in ancestry and upbringing with whom to associate, and he was compelled either to languish in solitude or mingle with the promiscuous mob. He chose the latter alternative, nor did he take any pains to hide the distaste which the descent caused him.

It was on the afternoon of the third day out that Honiton brought the news to the deck-chair party that Captain Spedley expected to stop twenty-four hours at Malta. The *Bedouin* would arrive early next day, and would not leave until the succeeding morning.

"How jolly," cried Jocelyn Upton. "We shall be able to hang another scalp on our wigwam. Do you know Malta, Frank? You do? Good! We must make him show us round, Mummy."

"Of course I shall be delighted," replied Honiton.

He felt the sudden pressure of Peter Brown's sinewy hand upon his arm—the first touch of authority since Alexandria had been left behind—but his face showed no sign that he understood the message. Without a pause he went on—

"You'll come, Brown, won't you? We'll make a day of it. Lunch, sights, tea, sights again, dinner, and perhaps the opera if there's anything on. What do you say, eh?"

Peter Brown did not answer immediately. Shore-going excursions had no place in the original bargain. It was tempting Providence to let his prisoner loose in a town like Valetta. Certainly if Honiton went, he must go, and how could he stop Honiton without a display of the authority that he had promised to conceal? It was merely another example of the folly of the whole arrangement.

"Come, old friend, you must come with us," said Honiton, turning upon him with an easy

smile. "We shall all enjoy our outing more if you do."

"Do come, Mr Brown," Mrs Upton urged. "You are such a restful companion compared to these two people."

"If I shall not be in the way." The detective surrendered. He could not see that any other course was open to him. Then hesitatingly—

"Perhaps Mrs Conliffe would like to join us."

"Oh do, Mrs Conliffe," cried Jocelyn.

No one thought of the possibility of Charlie Conliffe taking his wife to see the sights. They were so seldom together that people rarely remembered that Mrs Conliffe had a husband aboard.

"It is very nice of you to think of asking me," said Joan Conliffe in her quiet steady voice, with a glance at Peter Brown that pointed her thanks to him. "I shall not refuse until I know what arrangements Charlie makes. He may want to take me ashore."

But Charlie, upon inquiry at dinner, proved to be delighted that the responsibility of his wife was to be taken off his shoulders. It suited his tastes much better to go ashore with Murray and Scrymgeour, yet certain residues of decent feeling, or perhaps it was merely the thought that public opinion would charge him with neglect, would have interfered with his day's enjoyment had he gone off leaving his wife to look after herself—for, of course, he would have done so, if necessary.

The idea that had crossed Joan Conliffe's mind when first she had discovered Honiton aboard the *Bedouin* had long since corrected itself. She knew now that whatever was the cause of his sudden change of plan, it had nothing whatever to do with her. He treated her with the friendly consideration that he used towards every one; but she felt half-amused, half-ashamed that she should ever have imagined that he had any special interest in her.

At that time, of course, she had not suspected that he had other friends aboard. Jocelyn Upton, she thought, might well be the cause of Honiton's presence. She had heard him admit as much, when he first met the Uptons at dinner, yet somehow she had hardly believed him. She was certain that he had been speaking the truth that last day in Cairo, and no mere whim would have been sufficient to make him alter his plans. Her intuition carried her a step further, though it stopped far short of the truth. Honiton's presence aboard, she felt, had something to do with his meeting with Peter Brown—and Peter Brown was something of a mystery to her.

He was very reticent about himself in conversation with her. He could not be otherwise. The nature of his compact with Honiton prevented him, he felt, from announcing that he was a detective, and he let Mrs Conliffe understand that he was merely a tourist

like the others. Yet he did not possess any of the characteristics of a tourist in appearance, dress, or manner, and Mrs Conliffe felt that in this particular he was not quite open with her.

The details of the prospective excursion were talked over and arranged during dinner. Honiton discovered a considerable knowledge of Malta, and the leadership of the party was placed unreservedly in his hands.

"When we get back," Jocelyn Upton warned him, "you shall be tried by jury on the question of your success as a guide. Woe unto you if the verdict should go agin' you!"

Honiton laughed his jolly care-free laugh without a sign of embarrassment.

"I'm not worrying," he said. "Surely I can keep you all amused for one day in a strange city. There is something to interest every one."

"At least you are warned," replied Jocelyn with mock solemnity.

That Honiton was not so easy in his mind as he appeared in public was proved later when he and Brown were alone in their cabin.

Peter Brown had said nothing to indicate his disapproval of this excursion. He had acquiesced in it, therefore nothing that he could say would do any good. Why discuss an unpleasant topic? The vein of sensitiveness in his nature made him shrink from any such discussion, though his conscientiousness would always bring him to the scratch when necessary.

It was Honiton who broached the subject. He had been silent, with the uncomfortable silence that comes with something on the mind, and that communicates its discomfort to other minds concerned, while he undressed. He sat on the edge of his bunk, pyjama-clad, and looked at the detective, who, on the plush couch opposite, was clumsily sewing a button on the trousers he had just taken off, and feigning to be absorbed in his task.

It was a moment of unpleasant tension of which both were conscious.

"I say, Brown," said Honiton at last, and the effort with which he made the plunge was manifest in his voice, "you don't think I played fair about this trip ashore?"

Peter Brown sighed, sewed two final over-stitches, and bit off the thread. He put his needle away in the house-wife that was his constant companion—a pathetic thing in a man—and then carefully folded his trousers.

"I don't know," he said.

"How could I avoid it?" demanded Honiton eagerly. "What earthly excuse could I have given for refusing to go ashore? You agreed that I should travel as an ordinary passenger, but I should have been a most extraordinary one if I had stopped aboard all day."

"There's something in what you say," agreed Peter Brown,

scraping his jaw meditatively. "I saw that at the time. But I don't like it. Suppose you give me the slip——"

"I won't. I give you my word, Brown; even if you'd stopped aboard I should have come back to you. You have no idea how grateful I am for what you've done. I couldn't go and do the dirty on you—simply couldn't!"

"Perhaps what you say is true, but I couldn't afford to take the risk. However much I think I could trust you, I must stick to my job."

Peter Brown was silent for a time.

"The whole business is wrong," he went on after a time. "I should never have made a bargain with you, and allowed you to mix with—all sorts of people. I'm deceiving all these people—conniving at your association with them under false pretences."

"Every man is innocent until he's proved guilty. You said it yourself. I've still got to be tried, so there are no false pretences at all. You are worrying quite unnecessarily, Brown, and as for to-morrow, hang on to my coat-tails all day if you like, but believe me there's no need for it."

"Nevertheless, I shall," said Brown, but with the light of a smile in his eyes, as he looked up at his prisoner.

It was Honiton's turn to sigh.

"I wish I could think that you really trusted me," he said—sadly for him. "You and I like one another, you know."

He waited, but there was no answer. Then—

"All right," he said abruptly. "Good night, Brown."

CHAPTER VII.

It was quite a jolly day, and Peter Brown, notwithstanding his preoccupation with the guarding of his prisoner, could not help entering into the spirit of it. Valetta, with its quaint stairway streets peopled by goats, its magnificent view over the two harbours gay with gaudily-coloured gondola-like craft, its hooded, nun-like women, to say nothing of the official "sights"—the silver gates on the great church of the Knights of St John, the Chapel of Skulls, and the like—is a charming town to pass through, if a city of deadly monotony to live in.

Pleasantly tired, the party sat down to dinner in a hotel on the Strada Reale. Honiton had kept them interested and amused throughout the long day, and was inclined to enlarge, jocularly, upon his success as a cicerone.

"I'm not a bit afraid of your jury, Jo," he said, recalling Jocelyn Upton's threat of the previous evening. "I shall come before the court with such a mass of evidence in my favour that the prosecution—

if there be one—will collapse like a burst bladder."

"Many a man has lost his case by being too cocksure," retorted Jocelyn. "If you rely on our enjoyment of our day's outing as evidence for the defence, you must remember that all the things we have seen were there in any case—we had only to hire a guide and there you are!"

"Then I shall have to base my case on my fascinating personality," said Honiton. "No mere hired guide could have displayed his wares as I have done. The cultured periods, the flashes of epigram, the undertone of quiet humour, the whole elaborate but unforced——"

"You will have Sir Evan Pilth suing you for infringement of copyright if you talk like that," interrupted Jocelyn.

Honiton laughed.

"He has no copyright in that style. There are thousands as bad as he, particularly in the learned professions. But to return to my defence. I have kept the best to the last, the gala performance at the opera-house!"

"That's pure luck," replied Jocelyn. "You didn't call it up out of the vasty deep."

"But I *did* succeed in hiring a box, if it is rather high up in the house."

"True, we must credit you with that," admitted the girl. "Well, on the whole, I expect the jury will acquit you. You mustn't think I'm altogether dissatisfied; I merely wanted you to understand that you didn't *provide* all the things we've seen and are going to see."

"Thank you, my lord," said Honiton, bowing over his plate with mock solemnity.

It was always a source of astonishment to Peter Brown that Honiton could keep up such a jest without a sign of discomfort. Was it, he wondered, an example of perfect acting, or was the man able to forget his own future entirely, and live only in the moment? For himself, the detective suffered acute discomfort during such chatter as the foregoing. He winced at this talk of courts and juries, picturing in his mind that which must happen at the end of the voyage. It was he who turned the conversation into a new channel by asking information about 'Aida,' the opera that was to be performed.

There Mrs Conliffe came into her own. She was really fond of music, and her enthusiasm aroused, she talked freely and well. Peter Brown watched her with pleasure, and listened without comprehension. Music to him was a pleasant melody played by a band, a ballad song well sung, but that was all.

His enjoyment of the performance that followed lay in watching the face of Joan Conliffe. He realised—as he realised most things about himself—that his interest in her had grown altogether disproportionately to their three days' acquaintance, and he wondered

if he was wise to encourage its growth. It did not occur to him—so modest was he in his estimate of his own appeal to others—that he was capable of arousing a similar interest in the heart of Mrs Conliffe, and therefore he considered the new sensations that had come to him as affecting himself alone. Throughout the whole performance of Verdi's wonderful opera he permitted himself the pure physical enjoyment of looking at Joan Conliffe, who, adrift with the music, was utterly unconscious of his observation.

It was with an effort that he swung back to the necessity for watchfulness when, at the close of the performance, the party found itself once more upon the street, hemmed in and jostled by the dispersing crowd. Throughout the day it had been an easy matter to keep in constant touch with Honiton, but things were different in the darkness, with three women to be looked after. One can't move five abreast in a crowd, nor pack five passengers into a rickety Valetta cab.

Fortunately, as it seemed to the detective at the time, cabs could not be obtained.

"Never mind, let's walk," said Honiton cheerfully. "It isn't far to the harbour, and I guarantee not to lose the way."

"Lead on, Macduff," agreed Jocelyn, who was full of incongruous tags. "You are not too tired to walk, are you, Mummy?"

"Not a bit, my dear," replied Mrs Upton, "and it is a beautiful night."

"Come along, then. Let's first get out of this mush," said Honiton.

It is not easy for five people to keep in close touch while threading their way through a crowd, and Peter Brown, whose idea of tactics led him to bring up the rear, suffered acute discomfort as he craned his long neck above the sea of heads in an effort to keep Honiton, who led the way, in sight. His hope that the worst of his difficulties would be at an end when the edge of the crowd was reached proved to be unfounded.

In the chance sorting of companions that took place in the more open part of the street, Peter Brown, through his efforts to keep behind Honiton, was left with Mrs Upton and her daughter, while Honiton went ahead with Joan Conliffe.

"Come along," he called over his shoulder, as he drew his companion's arm through his own. "Keep close behind us, and you can't go wrong."

He led the way across the Strada Reale, and down one of the narrow side-streets that lead in the direction of the harbour. The detective endeavoured to keep in touch; but he reckoned without the still crowded thoroughfare and the leisurely movements of Mrs Upton, who, in addition, distracted his attention by her desire to enthuse over the opera.

Nevertheless, when the crowds were left far behind and only an occasional group appeared as a darker blot in the dark street, Peter Brown could still see Honiton and Mrs Conliffe some distance ahead. The gap, however, continued to increase, notwithstanding his efforts to hasten the pace. More than once, as Honiton turned a corner, he was lost to sight for quite an appreciable time, during which Peter Brown's heart was filled with apprehension.

Events soon proved that this feeling of dread was not without foundation. On turning a corner, where a dim lamp served to render faces visible, the group of three came face to face with Joan Conliffe returning to meet them—alone. The street ahead was empty.

"Honiton! Where is he?" exclaimed Peter Brown, his face hard and lined under the perpendicular light of the lamp above.

Mrs Conliffe seemed flustered —embarrassed.

"He is gone," she said, with some hesitation. "He should be back at any moment. He saw—some one he knew, and —and ran after him."

"Which way did he run? Has he just gone?" demanded the detective hurriedly.

"Yes, just a moment ago. It was up a narrow lane a little way ahead. I—I came back to meet you. He should be back at any moment."

Peter Brown observed the hesitation with which she spoke, and noticed a strange look of fear in her expressive eyes. How much did she know? he wondered.

"Why worry about Frank?" Jocelyn Upton demanded. "Surely he can't be in any danger? Hadn't we better go on? He is sure to catch us up."

It was only at this that Peter Brown realised the double awkwardness of his position. He could say nothing without exposing the real situation, and, even if he was prepared to do this, could he leave three unprotected women more or less lost amidst the mean streets of Valetta at close upon midnight?

In his heart he cursed Honiton. He was not greatly surprised. Nothing that his prisoners might do could astonish him greatly. He was prepared to find their motives and their actions abnormal, an attitude which was the outcome of long experience in his profession.

He cursed Honiton, but still more fervently he cursed Peter Brown, and the sentimentality that was at the root of all the trouble.

Jocelyn Upton looked at him with natural surprise. She could see no reason for the excitement he had shown nor for the brooding silence into which he had now fallen.

"I'm sure you needn't worry about your friend," she said, looking at him curiously. "This is quite a civilised town, and, anyhow, he looks quite able to take care of himself. Let's

move on slowly. He's sure to overtake us."

"I think Jo is right," said her mother. "It is getting very late, and we have still to find a boat to take us out to the ship."

"Do you think it is fair to desert Mr Honiton? He has been so kind and helpful to us all to-day!"

Mrs Conliffe spoke nervously, and Brown noticed how she kept glancing in the direction in which Honiton had disappeared. He was certain that she had not told all she knew.

He had made up his mind on his course of action. So far as he could see, it was the only one open to him. He must get his companions back to the *Bedouin*, and then return to the town and set the whole police organisation on the fugitive's track. It meant his own professional ruin, but he felt that he deserved it.

"Yes," he said, suddenly breaking from his reverie, "we had better get back. He is—he is sure to follow."

He could not forbear a faint ironic smile as he said the words, but it passed unnoticed.

"Come, let us get on," he added harshly.

"I think I shall wait a little longer. He said he would come back. I don't like to leave him in the lurch."

Each of them looked at Mrs Conliffe in surprise. There were tears in her eyes, and her usually calm face was agitated to the point of weeping.

Instinct taught Peter Brown to take her by the arm and lead her off down the street.

"Come," he said sharply; "we can't leave you here alone, and it is time you were all aboard."

Mrs Upton and her daughter followed closely, and Joan Conliffe made no further objection, though Peter Brown knew by the convulsive movement of the arm he held that she was weeping silently.

They had been quite near the harbour at the moment of Honiton's flight, and there was no difficulty in finding a boat. At Mrs Conliffe's suggestion they waited a few minutes for Honiton, but as he did not put in an appearance, Peter Brown gave the word to embark. The boatman, though probably a harmless and even respectable citizen, was a villainous-looking Maltese, whose broken English sounded like a stab in the back. The detective felt that, much as he would have liked to return immediately to the town, he must conduct his charges safely aboard ship, especially as Mrs Conliffe's agitation had communicated itself to Mrs Upton, and even in a lesser degree to Jocelyn.

It was a miserable ending to what had been a happy day for all of them. On the way out to the *Bedouin* Peter Brown succeeded in making a whispered arrangement with the boatman to hang on and take him back. He did not want his companions to know that he meant to return to Valetta. It was best to disappear out of their lives without explana-

tion. To tell the story of Honiton's shame and his own folly could do no good, and he wanted to leave a good impression—if he left one at all—on the mind of Joan Conliffe.

Garry received the party aboard ship. Several of the passengers were still to come, he said.

The ladies decided to remain on deck, in the hope that Honiton would follow them quickly; but Peter Brown went to his cabin at once, and began to pack with the utmost haste. It was all up with his career, he knew, but at least he was determined to recapture his prisoner.

CHAPTER VIII.

There was a certain strain in the relationship of the three women left on deck. The tears of Mrs Conliffe had not escaped the sharp observation of Jocelyn Upton, who felt that there was something here that was beyond her comprehension. It was not only the curious behaviour of Joan Conliffe that intrigued her. There was the obvious agitation of Peter Brown—an agitation altogether out of proportion to the gravity of the incident that aroused it, so far as she could see.

Instinctively, too, Mrs Upton had become alarmed, she hardly knew why or at what. Her tentative remarks met with mechanical answers until the poor lady was chilled into silence. So the three women hung, huddled together upon the rail for company, awaiting an event.

The silence was broken from the water of the harbour. Something seemed to be happening there. A dry sob of suspense startled the Uptons, mother and daughter. Glancing at Mrs Conliffe, they could see, even in the dim light of the ship's lamps, that she was trembling violently.

The sounds across the harbour increased in intensity until they materialised into the vociferations of a human voice. As this grew nearer to the ship, there became audible the sound of oars, and it was evident that some others amongst the passengers were returning from the town.

"Who can it be?" asked Jocelyn in the half-whisper that the situation seemed to demand.

"I expect it's Sir Evan and Lady Pilth, miss," said the suave voice of Garry, the chief steward, from behind.

The three women started simultaneously. They had not known he was by them. There was something about Garry—something slinking and secretive—that went against the grain.

Soon after there ceased to be any doubt of the identity of at least one of the homecoming passengers, or of the condition in which he was

returning. The drunken voice of Charlie Conliffe yelped across the water, and oaths and obscenities, at first decently veiled by distance, began to reach the deck in all their horrid nakedness.

At the same time flickering patches of light upon the water indicated the approach of two separate boats. It became evident that Charlie Conliffe was hurling the lees of his ill-matured mind at the occupants of the second boat. Some one in an indistinguishable voice was trying to quieten him, but without effect.

"It *is* Sir Evan and Lady Pilth, miss," repeated Garry, close to Jocelyn Upton's ear. "Mr Conliffe seems upset."

"Go away," cried the girl sharply.

Her nerves were on edge, and the suggestion of quiet enjoyment in the chief steward's voice disgusted her. Her vivid young imagination pictured the horror of being the wife of such a wreck as was revealed to her on the water. She dared not look at Joan Conliffe, so acute was her sympathy.

The boat containing the Pilths was the first to arrive. Sir Evan and his wife had been the guests of a high Government official, and had been to the gala performance at the opera-house in state. Sir Evan appeared on deck purple with outraged dignity, Lady Pilth pale and trembling, her festive opera-cloak and bejewelled person incongruous enough with her tear-streaked face.

"Never in the whole course of my career have I been subjected to such indignity," Sir Evan declaimed to the world at large. "It is shameful—shameful. Something will have to be done!"

He was so genuinely afflicted by the shock to his self-esteem that, pompous as he was, he became an object worthy of pity.

Meantime the second boat had reached the ship, and Charlie Conliffe was half-pulled, half-pushed up the companion to the deck.

"Le' me get at the damned old rat," he shouted at sight of Sir Evan Pilth. "Thinks I'm not good enough to come out in the same boat as him and his silly ol' cockatoo of a missus. Thinks I'm tight too, the old blighter! Le' me get at 'im, and I'll show 'im. Le' me knock his ruddy ol' face in."

Captain Spedley had a deck-cabin. The disturbance awakened him, and he now appeared clad in pyjamas and dressing-gown. He took in the essentials of the situation at a glance.

"Garry," he ordered sharply, "take Mr Conliffe to his cabin."

It required the united efforts of the chief steward and two assistants to carry out the order, and throughout the proceedings Charlie Conliffe cursed and spat obscenities, levelling the worst of his abuse at Sir Evan Pilth and his wife, who awaited his removal in order to get below quietly.

Just as it seemed that they had him safely down the stair

on his way to his cabin, Conliffe broke away from his captors, and almost succeeded in reaching the object of his drink-mad rage. The captain seized him and dragged him back.

He had one last fling with his tongue before he was finally hauled from sight, and he had enough drunken cunning to realise that he hurt Sir Evan most through Lady Pilth.

"*You*, you painted old Jezebel," he managed to shout as he struggled against his captors. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself at your time of life. What d'je mean coming out half-naked, stuck all over with diamonds like a damn demirep? You wait! You'll be lucky if you don't get the blasted lot pinched. I'd pinch 'em myself for tuppence."

He was half-way down the cabin stair before he reached the end of this last tirade, and after that muffled shouts of rage were all that could be heard from him.

Jocelyn and Mrs Upton had long since led Joan Conliffe to the far side of the deck, where she sobbed and trembled in her shame. She had reached such an extremity of nervous disturbance that the shrewd mind of the girl could not be content with the simple explanation before her. Mrs Conliffe knew that her husband was a drunkard, and though the exhibition he had just given might be unusually illuminating, it did not seem sufficient in itself to account for her state of agitation.

Jocelyn did not know what to say or do. She wanted to sympathise, to comfort, but it seemed hopeless. Her mother, feeling the situation beyond her, had slipped away quietly to her cabin.

"Dear," Jocelyn said gently, "don't take it to heart so badly. He will be better in the morning."

The older woman's fortitude gave way. She sobbed upon the girl's breast, and in the agony of a finally disillusioned wife, told what at any other moment she would have hidden like a deformity.

"It's not that," she said wildly, when she could articulate. "Heaven knows I am used to that. But to-night—coming down to the harbour—I saw him with a woman. You know what I mean—a *street* woman. They were going into a—a house. It is horrible. How can I ever—ever have anything to do with him again."

Jocelyn Upton felt an intense discomfort. She was not used to facing the crudities of life, and her sympathy for the woman was almost swallowed up in her girlish repugnance to the subject. She could do no more than stroke Joan Conliffe's shoulder.

Meanwhile Peter Brown had finished his hurried packing. He had been vaguely conscious of the disturbance on deck, but he was so obsessed by his own troubles that the noise above conveyed nothing definite to his mind.

He was doubled over a port-

manteau, straining on the straps, when the cabin door opened and Frank Honiton entered.

"Cheero, old friend," he said nonchalantly. "I've had a beast of a time."

Peter Brown stared at him, hardly at first realising the full significance of his presence. Then his lean sallow face flushed slowly. He felt a curious tingling in his eyes and a swelling of the throat that made it necessary for him to set his teeth hard. He could not, for the moment, trust himself to speak.

It was not relief from his own anxiety that overcame him, so much as a sudden admiration for the man who stood smiling before him. He knew — his quick and vivid imagination told him — just what Honiton's return to captivity must mean to him. What he did not yet know was the reason of Honiton's disappearance in the first instance.

"What brought you back after you had once got away?" he asked, when he had regained control over himself.

Honiton looked at him in surprise, and, as the meaning of the words came home to him, in anger.

"What d'you mean by 'got away'?" he demanded. "Do you think I bolted, then? Didn't Mrs Conliffe tell you?"

The detective shook his head, silently, inquiringly.

Honiton threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I see. So you don't know a thing about it, and you've been in a frightful stew thinking you'd lost me. I'm sorry, old friend, but I had to go."

He stopped for a moment, and another idea occurred to him.

"Dash it, you might have trusted me a bit," he said angrily. "I gave you my word of honour last night. I was on parole. And yet," he broke into his delightful smile again, "I suppose I've no cause to grumble. You don't look on me exactly as a man of honour, eh?"

"I'm damned if I know what to look on you as!" replied Peter Brown explosively. "If I knew nothing of your past——"

"Don't let's go into that now," Honiton interrupted hastily. "After all, there's got to be a trial before I'm guilty. Let me tell you about to-night. It's beastly, but you may as well know."

He sat up on the edge of the upper berth and lit his pipe. Peter Brown picked himself up from the floor, where he found himself still kneeling by the strapped portmanteau, and threw himself on the red plush settee.

"It was coming down that narrow street," Honiton went on. "I was ahead with Mrs Conliffe, you know, and we turned a corner and almost ran into that beast Conliffe. He'd got a woman with him—about the most obvious-looking trollop that you could imagine. Of course, he was tight as a lord. Mrs Conliffe gripped my

arm and stopped dead. We saw the pair of them go into a house, the nature of which was as obvious as the woman. Mrs Conliffe gasped out something about getting him away for God's sake, so I had to go after him. I knew you would be close behind—you wouldn't get very far from me, Brown, eh?—so I left her and bolted after her worthy husband."

"The dirty hound! But where were his tippling Scotch friends? I thought he was ashore with them?"

"Safely tucked up in their little beds. I had a look in on them just now. Snoring the snores of the just, both of them. They came home at their usual bedtime, I expect, neither drunker nor soberer than usual, and he refused to come with them. I had a bit of a rough house in that sink of iniquity. Conliffe didn't want to come with me, and the proprietress of the establishment objected to the loss of trade. The whole wretched affair is like a nightmare. I feel I want to spit the taste of it out."

He paused and puffed heavily on his pipe.

"I hate that sort of thing, Brown," he continued meditatively. "How any man can—well, never mind, I'm getting away from the story. We had a bust up with old Pilth after that. Ran into them at the harbour, and, by Jove, the old lady was got up to dazzle. She was hung about with diamonds like a—like an oil-man's shop with tin-cans. Fine stones too, Brown, absolutely top-hole!

"Conliffe wanted to share their boat, and I had a job to drag him away. All the way out he cursed them abominably, and when we got aboard there was another row. I was sorry for old Pilth. After all, he's not a bad old boy at heart. You could see that it was the insults to his wife that cut him up, and not the upset to his precious dignity after all. They've got Conliffe to bed at last. Took three of them to do it. I kept out of that. I'd had enough of the brute."

Peter Brown had been restless and distraught throughout the latter part of Honiton's narrative. His long sinewy hands were never still, twisting and untwisting, tapping his knee, rubbing his cheek.

"Where is Mrs Conliffe now?" he asked harshly. "Not with that insane swine?"

"I saw her on deck with Jo and her mother. I don't know where she is now."

"She can't go back to him. Somebody must see to it for her."

"It's their concern, not ours, old friend," said Honiton. "I don't see how we can interfere. Anyhow, he'll sleep like a pig all night and well into to-morrow. She's safe enough."

"Safe, be damned. The picture of her alone with that—satyr makes me sick. I must go and look to her."

"Better not, Brown," Honiton cautioned him. "Husband and wife, you know."

Peter Brown paused and thought.

"I don't care," he said after a pause. "I know I'm right to interfere, and if I get no thanks for it it can't be helped."

"You are the lineal descendant of Don Quixote, Brown," declared Honiton, shaking his head.

But the detective had already left the cabin.

CHAPTER IX.

"What am I to do?" Joan Conliffe asked helplessly, regardless of the fact that Jocelyn Upton was much less capable of answering the question than she was herself.

"If you stop up here much longer in that light frock you will be chilled," said Jocelyn, confining herself to the only part of the affair with which she felt competent to deal. "I'll go down now and get you a wrap."

"Thank you, dear. I do feel so cold."

Indeed, she was chilled to the heart in the reaction from all that had gone before. Left alone, she leant forward on the rail and stared out dully into the night. Her mind was numb now. She was incapable of thinking out a course for herself.

Peter Brown found her there alone. He had been busy since he left Honiton in their joint cabin. He stood and looked at her for a moment, then, with a sharp decisive nod, as it might have been to himself, he stepped forward and touched her arm.

"I want to be of service to you, Mrs Conliffe," he said, with more confidence than one would have expected from him. "I have just heard of your trouble from Honiton."

Mrs Conliffe turned towards him as though to speak, then, unable to find words or to meet his eyes, she turned quickly back to face the sea.

"I'm going to risk being called a meddler," Peter went on. "There are times when one must—Mrs Conliffe, you can't go back to your—to your own cabin to-night. I've seen the stewardess and fixed up a spare one for you. She is putting it in order now. Go down and see her and you will be all right."

She still stood at the rail with her back to him. Peter Brown patted her shoulder gently as one might caress an injured child. This last touch of kindliness was more than the already overwrought woman could bear. Her apparent self-possession broke down completely. She turned abruptly from the ship's rail, looked into the detective's face for a moment as if she could read there the purity and singleness of his motive, and then abandoned

herself to the comfort of his arms. With her head pressed into the shoulder of his shabby tweed coat, she cried and moaned with the sheer distress of the child that is hidden somewhere in every woman.

Peter Brown, his arms about her, his hand stroking her dark soft hair, uttered disconnected words of sympathy and encouragement. It was a strange situation for one who had led a solitary womanless life. The warmth and softness of her body, the fragrance of her hair, the very burden of her upon his breast, made him giddy. He almost forgot the cause of her abandonment in the physical ecstasy of the moment.

Then a true realisation of the circumstances flowed back to him, and he called himself a brute to have experienced such sensations. He took her hands gently from his shoulders, and drew away from her.

"Come," he said quietly, quite master of himself again, "you are not yourself, Mrs Conliffe. It is very late. You must go below. The stewardess is expecting you."

"Yes, yes; you are right," Joan Conliffe faltered. "I am being very silly; but you have been so kind and thoughtful—I felt I *could* give way. You will forgive me, won't you?"

"You make me ashamed by suggesting that there is anything to forgive," said Peter Brown. "Come, let me take you below."

"There is no need. I am all right now. Good night, Mr Brown. I can't thank you—ever."

She took his hand and pressed it, then hurried away.

The detective tramped the empty deck in the dark, wondering at himself. He was astonished at the riot of his own thoughts—disgust and loathing for Charlie Conliffe; a puzzled admiration for the prisoner Honiton; and—he admitted it to himself freely—a newly-awakened love for Joan Conliffe, which permeated and dominated all his other thoughts and feelings. He did not know what to make of, nor what to do with, this new experience. It brought him no happiness, for it held out no prospect of realisation. It was a sterile thing, as he saw it, that could never fructify, yet he felt that he would not part from it if he could.

Not once did it occur to him that the counterpart of his love might have germinated in the heart of Joan Conliffe.

Weary of his own thoughts, which led him nowhere, Peter Brown went below in the small hours of the morning. A grim smile crossed his haggard face at sight of Honiton peacefully asleep, his expression placid and unperturbed, as though he had nothing in the future or the past to worry him. There was humour in the situation—the detective sleepless and harassed, his prisoner sunk in easy slumber.

It was a relief to Peter Brown when morning came and the vibration of the engines, com-

bined with the confused sounds from the deck, told him that the *Bedouin* was clearing from Malta. He had not slept. He had not been able to tear his mind from the contemplation of the relationship of Joan Conliffe with her degraded and depraved husband. Now that he had realised and frankly admitted to himself his own feelings towards her, the picture of her tied to a creature like Charlie Conliffe filled him with abhorrence.

It was a relief to him that neither husband nor wife appeared at the breakfast or the luncheon table. He dreaded his first meeting with Joan Conliffe after the scene in the night. He felt that he could not look her in the eyes without an overwhelming embarrassment, and when, late in the afternoon, she came on deck and quietly seated herself in the chair by his side, he was astonished at her calm and self-possession.

"Good afternoon, Mr Brown," she said easily. "How do you feel after your long day ashore?"

Peter Brown stammered a more or less suitable reply. He was not prepared to slip back to the old footing as though nothing had occurred in the interim. Women alone possess the power of instant recovery from a lapse into the realities of feeling and emotion.

"You must let me thank you for troubling to find me a cabin," she went on, after a glance around to assure that her words were not overheard. "It was so good of you, and Charlie was really too bad last night. I shall have to talk to him about it."

She made light of the incident so easily and naturally that Peter Brown did not know whether to admire the perfection of her acting or to despise her for the shallowness of her emotion. He could hardly believe this to be the woman who had thrown herself upon his breast a few hours before in an extremity of distress. He did not think to apply to her the knowledge of women that he actually possessed, not realising that a woman is a woman whether she be of the criminal or the respectable classes.

The Honourable Steven Corris paused in his peregrinations, and threw himself down beside Mrs Conliffe.

"I say," he began eagerly, "I missed all the fun last night. Garry has just been telling me about it. No end of a lark it must have been to see your husband slanging old Pilth, Mrs Conliffe. Garry says he went right off the deep end. I'm sorry I wasn't there. I stopped the night ashore with a pal in the garrison."

"I shouldn't think the subject is one that can give Mrs Conliffe much pleasure to discuss," said Peter Brown, as mildly as he could, for he was itching to throw the Honourable Steven into the Mediterranean.

"You make too much of it, Mr Brown," said Mrs Conliffe,

with a light laugh. "Charlie was a very bad boy, but it was really rather funny to hear him attacking the dignified Sir Evan. It is a pity you missed it, Mr Corris."

The detective felt snubbed, and retired into his shell. The Honourable Steven grinned at him maliciously, his petty mind delighted with the other's discomfiture.

"Conliffe feels a bit next-morningish to-day, I expect," he said, taking a spiteful pleasure in dwelling upon the subject. "What a lark! He's just coming on deck. Gad!"

The appearance of Charlie Conliffe was sufficient to silence even the Honourable Steven Corris. From a leaden-grey face his pale eyes stared, rimmed with fiery red. His livid lips trembled as if beyond his control. He staggered across the deck, and threw himself into the chair that the Honourable Steven hastily vacated.

"Morning, old girl," he said huskily. "Don't say I look as rotten as I feel. I say, old chap, tell the smoke-room steward I want him, will you, that's a good chap."

The Honourable Steven actually obliged his plebeian fellow-passenger. Peter Brown, left alone with the Conliffes, made to rise, feeling himself *de trop*. Joan Conliffe's hand upon his arm held him to his seat.

She was not, then, so sure of herself as she made believe. Her face was pale, and the detective noticed that she did not look at her husband.

"It *was* a sticky night," said that worthy ruefully. "Never mind! Velvet is the stuff to pull a chap together. Ah! here's George. I say, George, open a bottle of stout and a half-bottle of bubbly and mix 'em. Don't be long, George, there's a good chap."

"Have you had any food?" asked his wife, still without looking at him.

"Food! Good God, if you had my mouth you wouldn't talk about food. Feels as if a rat had died in it. Never mind, George will put me right."

Honiton came up from below and joined the group.

"Hullo, Conliffe," he said cheerily. "You look pretty dicky! Feeling queer?"

"I'll be all right when George comes back."

He looked at Honiton in a puzzled fashion, his pale bloodshot eyes watering in the bright sunshine.

"Seem to remember meeting you last night," he hazarded. "Was I—was I—well away?"

Before Honiton could answer the embarrassing question, George appeared with a very tall glass on a tray.

Charlie Conliffe's face lit up amazingly. He seized the glass, but could not bring it to his lips without the aid of his other hand. There was a silence as he absorbed the contents of the glass, which he did without a pause.

"Ah!" he exclaimed in a deep sigh, "that's the stuff to give 'em!"

The effect was almost imme-

diate. The leaden look left his face, giving place to a colour that had in it some approach to health. The pale eyes steadied and sparkled, and the tremulous lips came under control.

"That's the stuff to give 'em," he repeated; "nothing to touch it!"

He held out his hand, and looked at it curiously.

"That's good enough for anything," he declared, observing the steady outspread fingers with a comical—or pitiable—self-satisfaction.

"Must go and see old Scrymgeour and Murray," he went on. "I want to find out what happened last night. There's nothing like comparing notes next day."

"You had better stop where you are," said his wife.

Her voice had a cold inhuman sound, and she steadily looked out towards the sea.

"If you go to the smoking-room you will only have more drinks, and you have had nothing to eat."

Charlie looked at his wife in surprise. She did not usually attempt to control his movements.

"All right, old thing," he said good-humouredly, "there's nothing to worry about. I'll stop here for a bit."

Jocelyn Upton appeared upon the deck, a book in her hand.

CHAPTER X.

It was Jocelyn's first meeting with the Conliffes since the events of the previous night. At sight of them her colour increased, and she paused as if to turn back, then, thinking better of it, advanced to her chair beside Honiton, bowing with a strained smile as she passed.

Honiton, feeling the embarrassment that was in the air, made an effort to dissipate it.

"What's the book, Jo?" he demanded.

"Just the usual drivel," replied Jocelyn. "Why can't novelists find something novel, I wonder?"

"I don't know, unless it is that there *is* nothing novel. Solomon made a remark to that effect, I believe—and that's some time ago. Why don't you have a shot at it yourself?"

"I believe I shall, some day," said Jocelyn.

She was ready to talk, with that super-readiness that dreads a pause.

"I should look for a fresh untouched locality, somewhere in the East, subtle and mysterious, and——"

"I know," interrupted Honiton. "Samarkand is the sort of place you mean. Narrow ways thronged with multi-coloured crowds, noisy with the harsh tones of their barbaric tongues; cool dark courtyards where fountains play, and veiled figures watch the golden fish

swimming lazily just beneath the surface; languishing eyes glinting through green lattice, and all that sort of thing."

Jocelyn laughed, ready to enter upon any topic that cleared the air.

"Yes, Samarkand would do," she agreed. "I like the sound of it. My heroine would be an English girl. She would arrive alone before the gates of Samarkand by night, mounted upon a snow-white ass. On either hand the desert would stretch to meet the deep indigo of the sky."

"I say, that's rather good. You really must go on with this, Jo."

"I think it's your turn. I can't keep up the pace I have set."

"Brown, you must help with this romance," said Honiton, turning to the detective. "Let's turn it into a limited liability company."

"I'm afraid my imagination will not help the company much," replied the detective. "I'll do my best, though. Let me see. The heroine's name would be Jane——"

"That's right," broke in Charlie Conliffe from his chair at the end of the line. "And it would be very late—past closing-time—and she'd knock at the doors of all the pubs without getting an answer."

Jocelyn Upton took up the tale.

"She would ride on through narrow streets paved with silver moonlight and patched with velvet-black shadows, seeking, but never finding, an asylum for the night, until at last, overcome by hunger and exhaustion, she would slip from the back of the white ass to the hard cobbled street.—Go on, Frank."

"The wise ass would walk quietly to a recess in the roadway and lie down, his back supported against a white plastered wall. Jane, struck by the brilliance of the idea, would join him, pillowing her fair head upon his soft white neck. Both, exhausted by the long journey and the heat of the day, would at once fall into a deep slumber.—Brown, you ought to introduce the villain now."

The detective smiled, and hesitated for a moment in thought.

"How would this do?" he said. "As the first pink rays of the sun reddened the gold upon the tallest minaret of Samarkand, the Sheikh would awake and, summoning a few of his attendants, set out through the streets before any but the meanest of his subjects were astir."

"I see," said Jocelyn. "As he wandered abstractedly through the city, his eye would light upon a little group which would be staring in amazement at the recumbent forms of Jane and her white ass, still wrapt in deepest slumber. Upon the arrival of the Sheikh the populace would retire discreetly into the background.—You must describe the touching scene of Jane's awakening, Frank."

"The Sheikh would stand

long silent, gazing with parted lips and bated breath. Never before would he have seen such a vision of loveliness.

"'Allah,' he would cry, 'never in Samarkand was seen so perfect a specimen of a white ass.'

"At this Jane would awake with a start, and, sitting up, would look around in a confused manner."

"Rather stilted," pronounced Jocelyn. "'Confused manner' won't do at all. She would gaze mistily around, confused by her sudden awakening."

"All right," Honiton grumbled. "If my style is not up to the level of the story, you'd better go on with it."

"I will," replied Jocelyn. "Slowly the reality of her position would creep upon the solitary girl.

"'Of course, this is Samarkand,' she would exclaim; then, turning to the Sheikh, 'How d'you do? Are you the ruler of this city?'

"'Oh, Vision of Loveliness,' the Sheikh would answer, 'I am. May I have the honour of your company to breakfast?'"

"Now, *would* he say that?" interrupted Honiton critically.

"Of course he would. He would see that the poor girl looked half-starved."

"Very well, admitting that he would, she would reply—

"'Delighted, I'm sure, O Sheikh. A simple dish of eggs and bacon——'

"She would get no further. A howl of execration would arise from the crowd that would by now have assembled at the insult. Bacon — the unclean food—at the Sheikh's table!

"Jane would look round upon the enraged multitude with astonishment. Quite unaware of her offence, she would nevertheless realise quickly that she was in a tight corner. She would see that the Sheikh could not be counted upon to espouse her cause, for his eyes would stab her with a hatred born of disgust."

"Still, Jane would not be done yet," said Jocelyn. "She would espy a place where the crowd was thin, and leaping nimbly upon the white ass's saddle, would make a bid for safety. Brushing aside like flies the few who withstood her, she would guide her mount down the narrow street at breakneck pace, the whole mob, headed by the Sheikh, in wild career behind her. Now, what is going to happen?"

"It is clear," said Honiton, "that such a race could not continue long. The city would now have awakened to the traffic of the day, and it would only be a matter of time before Jane would be stopped at a crossing. When all hope of ultimate escape seemed vanished, Jane would notice on her left an opening in the white wall of a building. She would jerk the rein and guide her fleet steed through a dark arched passage, where his hoofs would hammer noisily and re-echo from the vault above."

"Oh, do let me describe

what she would find," cried Jocelyn. "Out into a sunlit courtyard patterned in cool mosaic, with, in its centre, a plashing fountain falling musically into a marble basin, the white ass would gallop. Through shady cloisters Jane would see dimly into a room rich with oriental colouring. What would she find within?"

"I know," replied Honiton. "Urged by the tumult of the crowd without, she would cross the threshold of the mysterious chamber, taking with her the white ass, from whom she would refuse to be parted. Their foot-and-hoof falls would be muffled by the thick Eastern carpet upon the floor. Rich hangings, dimly visible by the light of a jewelled gold lamp hung from the domed ceiling, would cover the walls.

"Jane would become aware of a subtle aroma permeating the whole chamber—a strange yet familiar odour that would call up memories of the past, and suggest vague longings. A faint slight sound would reach her ear, coming from behind a silken screen in a corner of the room. Listening intently, she would recognise it as the laboured breathing of a living creature.—Now, go on, Jo."

"I've got it," replied the girl. She had forgotten her embarrassment, forgotten indeed everything but the interest of this new game. "Spurred by the danger that pursued her, she would step forward boldly and throw aside the screen, to find herself face to face with a venerable white-bearded man, fear written large upon his every feature, huddled over——"

"A plate of fried pork sausages," interjected Charlie Conliffe, who had been listening intently.

"No, no," cried Jocelyn; "you will spoil it all."

"Not a bit," said Honiton; "we can't cut anything out. Let's see what we can do with them.

"'Sausages!' Jane would exclaim; 'so that was what I smelt. I thought it seemed familiar.'

"'Betray me not, O Houri of Paradise,' the trembling wretch would cry. 'I will reward thee beyond belief.'

"'One good turn deserves another,' Jane would reply. 'Save me from the savage populace, and I shall keep your horrible secret. But how come you to indulge in pork in Samarkand?'

"'I learnt the vice in the West when but a youth,' the wretched man would answer, his eyes cast down in shame. 'My utmost effort will not prevail to shake it off.'

"'But whence cometh the means to indulge your horrid craving?'

"The old man would creep close and whisper fearfully in Jane's ear.

"'I import them from England concealed in piano-cases.'

"The cries of the populace in the courtyard would bring these gruesome revelations to

an abrupt close.—And now, having raised the sausages to a position of some dignity, I leave it to you, Jo."

"Very well. Drawing aside the rich hangings upon the wall, this aged monster of depravity would reveal a narrow opening leading directly on to a spiral staircase.

"'It is our only chance,' he would whisper tremulously.

"'We can't leave poor Neddy behind. He would be a clue,' Jane would answer. 'Neddy, old boy, can you twist yourself up here?'

"Without a word in reply, the wise ass, with the skill of a contortionist, would lead the way up the winding stair. Up and up they would go, higher and higher, until all three would pant and labour painfully for breath. At last, after climbing many hundreds of steps, the bright light of the sun would appear ahead, and a moment later they would come out upon a circular marble platform, on which there would be no more than room for the three of them to stand. A low parapet of translucent marble would surround this restricted space, and, peering over, Jane would descry the roofs of Samarkand hundreds of feet below. —Go ahead, Frank."

"'You are at the top of the tallest minaret of the city,' her aged companion would explain. "'I built it that I might indulge my hideous vice in safety. Here, over this little brazier, I have grilled countless thousands of sausages, and never a whiff has reached the nostrils of the populace. But as age has grown upon me, the rheumatics have got in my bones, and I find the stairs too much for me. It was thus that you caught me consuming the first dose of the day below.'

"Meanwhile, in the courtyard below, the angry crowd would be prying everywhere in search for their quarry. It would not be long ere they would invade the room where Jane had found her new friend. Suddenly the Sheikh would utter a cry of rage and horror as his eye lit upon the plate of fried sausages, hastily abandoned in the flight.

"'Allah!' he would exclaim, 'that such a sacrilege should mar the honour of Samarkand! Woe is me!'

"His rage would be reflected in the cries of the angry multitude upon his heels. A perfect pandemonium would arise, so resounding in its din as to be heard even upon the pinnacle upon which Jane and her ill-assorted companions rested precariously.—Now, what would happen?"

"I think," said Jocelyn, "that suddenly the acrid odour of smoke would make itself felt amongst the angry crowd. There would be sure to be some one in the throng with enthusiasm and initiative enough to fire the house. Then would come the stampede for the exits. Screams of terror would replace the cries of rage as flames began to lick around the hangings and flicker in the

dim corners of the chamber. In less time than it takes to tell, the house would be empty but for the three unfortunates perched like rooks high in the clear air."

"I say, you are making it a bit awkward to carry on the story," Honiton protested.

"It's your turn," retorted Jocelyn. "You have to get them down somehow. We can't have our heroine cremated so early in the story."

"Let's see," said Honiton thoughtfully. "The conflagration would spread quickly. Soon huge angry tongues of flame would burst through the light roof and lick viciously about the base of the minaret. The winding staircase would become one seething, scorching pit of flame."

Honiton paused, his imagination for the moment at fault. Before he could resume, an interruption occurred which drove the ridiculous fantasy from all their minds.

Upon the deck there appeared the figure of Sir Evan Pilth, no longer dignified and self-possessed, but with scarlet face and bulging eyes. He wore neither coat nor waitcoat, his collar was loose and tieless, and one of his braces was undone.

So unlike himself was he that every one knew at once that something of unusual seriousness had happened.

"Where is the captain?" he cried, his loose, orator's lips trembling. "My wife's diamonds—Lady Pilth's diamonds—they are gone!"

(To be continued.)

IN THE LITTLE NEW COUNTRIES.

BY MAJOR LINDSAY BASHFORD.

VIII.

"YOU'RE in Lettland," the little man had said; "what do you make of it?"

I looked at him in some curiosity. He was short, plump, and rather shabby, his hair was grey and his dark eyes very bright. I had hardly observed him during our voyage in the motor omnibus, but there was a certain suppressed enthusiasm in his voice that made me study him now.

"It's delightful, if it's all like this," I said vaguely. Glancing again at the gay, crisp colouring of the water-meadows and the delicate outlines of distant forest in morning sunlight, I added, fascinated, "Yes, it's unforgettable. Such a country *must* get on."

"Look again," said the little man.

And suddenly I was in the grasp of the knowledge that I was seeing through the outward surface charm of this adorable landscape to the wider influences at work behind, looking at a whole network of forces, cardinal and unchangeable, of which some were sinister and many glowing. Rather bewildered by this sudden impression, I looked at the little commonplace man beside me.

"We're a very new little country," he said in his rather shy way. "We only began life as an independent state on 18th November 1918. We fought our way to freedom, and now we've got to fight to keep free. It won't be easy, but we're quite resolved. You begin to see," he added, "what our difficulties are."

"Why, yes!" I cried; "all this beautiful country is empty. It's simply aching for cultivation. There's nobody doing anything with it. There are no cattle, no crops, no horses—a few potatoes, a few geese and pigs,—really that's about all I've seen, now I come to think of it, and that's life on starvation scale. The farm buildings seem solidly built, but I very much doubt if there is much in them."

"I could talk to you for hours," said the Lett, "of the utter destitution which the war has left behind. But you will see it for yourself, and that will make it seem more real. Before the war, for example, our big city of Riga had a population of half a million. Now its population is less than two hundred thousand. Before the war little children under five years of age formed well over eight per cent of our population. Now they form only four per cent. In certain

districts the depopulation due to the war amounted to eighty per cent. Owing to the war, too, prices of necessaries—things like bread, eggs, sugar, butter, oils, and a score of others—have risen from one hundred to three thousand times the normal rate, but wages at best have only doubled. But don't imagine we're depressed. Not a bit of it. We're going to make our little country a happy and prosperous state."

Smiling at me, the little man hummed a lilt of song.

"What's that?" I inquired, for his enthusiasm and confidence had quite obliterated the commonplace of his appearance and his shabby creased clothes. Everything he did interested me vividly.

"A fragment of one of our old Lettish folk-songs," he said. "We have many thousands of them—centuries older than anything Russian. Let me translate—

"God, give to the men of our race
Long life full of hard work!
Through each hour of such a life
Let them strive for what is Best.
And bless Thou
The busy handiwork of our maidens."

"In how many very ancient songs," asked the little man, "is hard work the *motif*, and not conquest, revenge, or passion? I like to think of these songs as illustrating the spirit of our little people."

In a willow-edged hollow just below the level of the bridge nestled two small cottages, their tiny vegetable patches extending to the water's edge. I had been down to them a little time previously in hope of purchasing coffee and bread for breakfast, but I had been received with the suspicion which five years of war has bred in the once merry and open-hearted peasantry of many European countries. Now, however, the women came up from them towards the main road, cleanly clad for church, with bare feet, but gaily coloured kerchiefs over their heads. They were fine upstanding and vigorous women; the eldest, who must have been seventy, was as straight as her daughter in the early twenties. Their features were firm and full of character, and their eyes alight with vivacious curiosity at the unexpected appearance on their country highway of town-clad strangers at that early hour. They gave us a cheerful greeting as they went by, and laughed at the chaff of my travelling companion.

He turned towards me with twinkling eyes.

"We have a hard-working, cheery, and sturdy peasantry," he said. "And they are quite exceptionally intelligent too. Nearly all our history long we have been oppressed, either by Russians from one side or Germans from the other. But neither the spirit of my people was ever crushed nor its intelligence brutalised. Roughly, when the war began, there were some two and a half million Letts under a very rigid and narrow Russian rule.

We had amongst us then more than two thousand two hundred societies working in one direction or another for the benefit of the Lettish race, and of these societies six hundred and seventy concentrated on popular education. We had sixty Lett periodicals in spite of the Russians. Our old original Lett literature is rich and vigorous. Every cottage had its daily paper. We had no illiterates."

The little man was stirring to enthusiasm as he talked. We paced the bridge in the sunshine, which was becoming momentarily pleasanter. There was no sign of our relief lorry, but I had now resigned myself to life in the Land without a Clock. We might quite conceivably be here all day!

"As you travel through these little countries," my fellow-traveller continued, "there is one thing you must particularly bear in mind. The great old nations are working desperately hard to recover balance again after the war; they must go through reaction, there will be infinite rearrangements, withdrawals, adjustments. For all these tremendous processes, however, they have existing and established institutions ready to tackle each task as it comes along, well-tested precedents, traditions, and trained men. The little new nations who have struggled through and, owing to the war, have won their independence, have none of these things. Not only have they to set to work to remedy the desolation caused by the war, but they have as well to create and set in motion the whole machinery of a modern state capable of holding its own in the competitive life of the modern world. Oh," he cried, with a gesture that was very pathetic, "we are so inexperienced. Our task is so colossal; our resources so very small. Why, the Chief of State of one of these little new countries was a farmer five years ago, and the Foreign Secretary of another is a young man in the early thirties!"

Round a sudden bend in the road there came a group of our fellow-travellers of the previous night. They, too, were on the look-out for the relief lorry. The Polish-Jews were there with the nondescript shabby hybrids from nowhere in particular, and as they shambled along the group was singularly unattractive. Not one of them had the physique, the open free bearing of the peasant women who had come up from their cottages a few moments before. In that spacious and sunny country they seemed dingy, furtive, and out of place.

The little man regarded them with the first hint of cynicism I had noticed on his plump bright face.

"There come the parasites," he said in a low voice. "They lurk fitly in the shadow of the trees and avoid the sunlight. Men without a single healthy motive, without a single disinterested enthusiasm; men

who have never in their lives been lifted to the heights or dragged into the depths in the grasp of a big simple passion." My instinctive comparison of this group with the peasant women had been made by him too. "Generally," he reflected, "the peasantry are the sturdiest force in a community. We look to the peasantry in the long-run to give energy and balance to Lettland. When you cover up the earth with paving-stones you deprive the people living there of some of the simple steady earth-qualities. In their place hysteria is bred and artificial conventions, abnormal emotions, distorted and excitable points of view. The perspective gets erratic; in some directions too lax, in others too narrow. We fine down our theories and our methods and forget that big things—like love and work and statecraft—are inherently big, and not made so by even the biggest men. I'm rhapsodising," said the little man, "but that group of slinking hybrids illustrates our gravest problem. The British Empire knows well the dangers of mixed blood; it is a commonplace with you that a half-breed generally embodies the vices of both sides and the virtues of neither. Perhaps colour is the gravest problem of all; but, if we in Central Europe do not have to cope with that, we at least have elements of mixed races and their consequent vices and passions far more subtle and widespread than anything the most depraved of tropical colonies throws up from its forest hiding-places.

"We saw at once the beauty of Mr Wilson's vision of self-determination. We saw, too, that it was utterly unworkable. If only by some Titanic and far-seeing jugglery our old pure stock could be restored to the new countries, free from any alien mixture, how infinitely easier would our task of state-making be!

"And everywhere in these regions you have to reckon with that quiet and powerful man who loves no country because he is citizen of none, who loves only power and money and beauty, who is strong just because he is utterly dispassionate and has no prejudices, whose code of conduct is not ours, whose heart is never with us, who uses the passions of others, but himself has none—the Jew. I do not think I am biassed. I am trying to define. And as I wander over Europe to-day I see that, apart from the political increase in power of the conquerors in the war, the two non-State forces that have most greatly gained in influence during it are the Jews and the Roman Catholic Church. To these a new force must be added which may perhaps become the strongest of all—Bolshevism."

From a distance there came the clatter of a motor-lorry driven fast. Our relief had arrived. Before noon we were driving over cobbles and beneath a high poplar avenue

into Libau. Our arrival at the hotel was clearly the event of the day. In a curious crowd our long-suffering party dispersed. The conscientious chauffeur received his tip. The pudding-faced young man staggered pallidly away with the remains of his smuggled case of champagne and schnapps. The Scots nurse, whose cheerful pluck had been the admiration of every one, took her charges into the dining-room with the promise of a stupendous luncheon. I sent to book places on the night mail to Riga, and turned to say good-bye to the little Lett merchant. He had collected his traps, and was on the point of plodding off to his home in a neighbouring street.

"You're a great champion of your people," I said as we shook hands.

He smiled humorously.

"I? Oh, no! When we've got a State to make we all have to think about things. I'm not an apostle. I'm in the drapery trade."

IX.

"Are we downhearted—NO!"

The spirited old tag kept recurring to me as I travelled through the little new Baltic countries, and especially during my stay in Riga, now the capital of Lettland. Seldom have I encountered so sturdy and hopeful a people, such unaffected gaiety, and so friendly a spirit in all classes.

We reached Riga on a morning of brilliant sunshine. In autumn the Baltic climate is superb. The air is cool and crisp. Day succeeds day of exhilarating brightness. Vigour seems to reinforce every limb, and everybody smiles. The narrow streets of the old port were filled with that intimate and varied intercourse which, to my mind, the wide boulevards of the modern world tend to thin out and estrange. In the book and music shops there was always exhilarating talk to be had with wise old men who had known the bad years of the Russian oppression and the early timid beginnings of the Lettish push for freedom, or with eager schoolboys burning to help in the building up of their country. The restaurants were doing well, and food was certainly plentiful, especially, of course, goose, pork, ham, salads of shell-fish in cream and the inimitable Slav soups. Here one could forget that pallid and insipid beer of Warsaw; here were measures still of fine Burgundies and Hermitage and generous cordials to conjure sound philosophy in a man!

The beautiful gardens, parallel with the river, which separate the old city from the new, became a riotous wealth of autumn gold and red. I could fill my rooms with tall gladioli, roses,

carnations, and great pompous chrysanthemums. At the opera I heard an admirable Lettish work, "Banuta," and to the first night of "Lohengrin" the whole Riga world thronged. A vigorous school life was in full swing in the city, and each evening the crowded happy-hearted public recreation grounds were delightful to watch. Symphony music was constantly being given. In the theatre one evening a performance was given for us of a fine Lettish historical drama, with the revolt of a people against oppression as its central theme. The breadth of the acting and the simplicity and superb colour of the scene were singularly impressive. It was the "William Tell" of Lettland.

That evening we supped at the house of an exceedingly attractive and able Lett girl of twenty-four, who owns and herself manages one of the few big trading concerns left in Riga. She held her "salon" with an ease and polish of manner that can only have been acquired in St Petersburg, in its brilliant Czarist society, for the travelled Russian aristocrat was the most polished person in the world.

During the stupendous meal—for the Letts are as thorough-going as the Slavs in eating, drinking, and making merry—a sextett of singers came in from the opera and sang to us many of the marvellous old Lettish folk-songs; drinking, cradle, and love songs, domestic burlesque of the jolliest, broad fun and bitter songs of the oppressed crying down Heaven's curse upon his oppressor.

"Oh poor German guest!
What would'st thou in our wretched hut?
Thou can'st not stay in the yard,
For in the yard is wind and rain,
Thou can'st not stay within,
For within is smoke.
Listen! I will advise thee!
Go to the bottom-most place of Hell
Where the Devil makes his fire!
No rain there, German! No smoke there!"[1]

Wistful or rollicking, these songs disclose a quite remarkable national genius for music; they seem to come straight from the earth to illumine the simple issues of peasant lives. Some of these strangely lilting songs are so ancient that they refer to "green swords"—clearly of bronze—and some even to so primitive and rigidly close a clan existence as to authorise marriages of brother and sister.

The vegetable and flower market at Riga stretches along the quay. Wandering here I felt at close quarters with the sturdy peasant spirit so vigorously portrayed in the songs. The cheery old women had good vegetables to sell, and their apples were simply magnificent. I feel almost tempted to call Riga the Apple City. Everywhere shops and stalls were piled high with plump and shining apples. Their fragrance

[1] Quoted as a vivid expression of race hatred by Mr Ralph Butler in his book, 'The New Eastern Europe.' In those days Lettish cottages had no chimneys.

filled the air. Whole streets seemed rosy with them. It was a happy indication of the natural possibilities of the little country when I learned that this, to me, superb crop was only normal. Apples came, after a little while, to typify the life of Riga for me. They and she seemed alike so cheerful. I hunted long to find the right word to express the air and life of this city—I hit on it eventually: *gusto!* The shield, of course, has its dull side. Riga is but the skeleton of the splendid seaport she was once. I motored through streets of battered and empty factories, of dishevelled tenements. There is great poverty, but there is greater pluck. Hardship is grappled with sturdily and in stout heart. The Lett may not have much money in his purse, but he will not laugh the less merrily nor dance the less featly for that. There are no loafers in Lettland, and I never heard a grumble. The boys and girls are fine and keen, the mothers most admirable managers. Life, from the home outwards, goes with a swing in little Lettland. Gusto is in all the Letts do, and they are always doing something.

One morning I happened to cross the square opposite the Riga railway station. Noticing a crowd quickly gathering, I paused. Troops came pouring down the steps from the platform and out into the square. There, blinking in the sunshine after the long night's train journey from Libau, they formed up. Each wore a sprig of greenery or a flower. Discipline conceded so much to a great occasion. They had come from Siberia, and had spent a mere trifle of six months on the journey. They had come home to Lettland.

In the early days of the war the Letts, yearning for independence, found themselves perched painfully on the horns of a dilemma. Of much older origin than the Russians—for they are Indo-European and not Slav—they were subject to Russia, and the attempted Russianising of their provinces had been a sufficiently ruthless proceeding. So the Letts hated the Russians. On the other hand, the Germans had been their masters from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth, and, subsequently under the Russians, had remained owners of most of the land and dominant in all local matters. Where the Russian uses whips bluffly, the German employs scorpions in dark corners, and the hatred of the Lett for the German was devastating.

Finally, the Letts decided to back Russia. Lett battalions were formed as early as 1915 and did remarkably well. Before the German advance, the Russian armies laid waste huge Baltic areas, and the Russian Government ordered a wholesale exodus of the Lett population. One province was denuded of two-thirds of its people; the population of the seaport of Windau fell from 35,000 to 3000. The Lett

regiments fought on; but when the chance came in 1917 they threw in their lot with the Bolsheviks, not because they sympathised with Bolshevist ideas or approved the barbarity of Bolshevist methods, but because they hoped to achieve something towards the deliverance of their own race. In the grandiose muddle of Bolshevik warfare Lett units found themselves fighting in Siberia. It was the return of some of these that I witnessed at Riga that morning.

Was ever situation more remarkable than that of these men? After weary months of hardship and vague fighting in a war that concerned them very little, here they stood once more at home! They had been so long away, and correspondence had been so haphazard and irregular, that they had hardly yet had time to grasp the wonderful fact that the little land they had left enslaved and devastated was actually independent. Here were its leaders welcoming them home with a ceremony that to me was extraordinarily affecting. Everything was very simple. The moment was too big for pomp. The troops marched briskly off to barracks with a touching expression of mingled delight, wonderment, almost of exaltation on their bronzed and worn peasant faces; We in Britain are so accustomed to freedom in all its thousand secure and comfortable manifestations that it is difficult for us to imagine what it must mean to a man suddenly to know that he and his are free.

This thrill of freedom, this emphasis of the inherent qualities of their race, I found everywhere in the little new countries. The eager cultivation of their national music and literature is part of it; the booksellers fill their windows with Lett literature. Whilst I was at Riga a clever Lett painter held an exhibition of his work. I was shown manuscript music of very effective work by a young Lett composer. When manufactures can get started up again, I am sure that Lett goods will be on sale in preference to the cheap and gimcrack stuff which Germany is now pouring into Lettland. Before the war the Lettish peasants made their own cloth, and judging by the roll of it which the Department of Agriculture gave me, it must have been exceedingly good. This emphasis of race is, of course, partly propaganda; the Letts, Esths, and Lithuanians want the world to know that they are capable of going ahead on their own. It is frank and ingenuous propaganda, very different from the cruel insidious playing upon credulity which is practised in Austria and Germany and by Bolshevism.

Of the three little peoples on the Baltic seaboard, the Esths are the most placid, the Letts the most vigorous and enterprising, and the Lithuanians the most restless. Esthonia lies to the north of Lettland. Reval and Dorpat are her two considerable towns,

and she has at present a very exiguous railway system indeed. The Esths are of old Mongolian stock akin to the Finns, and it is consequently probable that their future interests will work in with those of free Finland across the water. Esthonia is only nine months older than Lettland, and, like Lettland, is at the moment desperately short of all manner of material essential to development. But with a stolid determination that one cannot but admire, this tiny nation is already getting to work. Railway extensions have been planned. Gradually agriculture, her mainstay, will be reorganised, and efforts made to open up again former industries—linen, cloth, paper, starch, varnish, rope, matches, and a half-score more. Lithuania, with the oldest language in Europe, came into her own on 16th February 1918; but her hold on life is still somewhat precarious, and her territorial disputes with Poland are not yet over. The boldness and breadth of the ideal which these Baltic peoples have set up for themselves is most vividly shown, I think, by a phrase which occurs in the constitution of Esthonia—

"There cannot be *any* public privileges or prejudices derived from birth, religion, sex, rank, or nationality."

A British Cabinet Minister once made a singularly tactless remark to listeners from across the Atlantic. He was in the act, let us assume, of showing them the Thames from the terrace of the House of Commons.

"The Mississippi," he said, "is just so much dirty water. The St Lawrence is just so much dirty water. But the Thames is liquid history."

The Thames has no monopoly in liquid history. What innumerable high adventures have not disturbed and stained the waters of Danube, Vistula, Niemen, or Dwina, on which stands the port of Riga, once aglow with activity, now so tragically desolate! The three seaports of Lettland—Riga, Libau, and Windau—once carried twenty-five per cent of Russian trade. I went over the port of Riga with its chief marine engineer in his launch, and from him I learned much of the difficulties confronting Lettland, and of the constructive work planned and begun. It was an unforgettable experience thus to traverse the wide empty spaces of grey water; to penetrate into empty docks and regard deserted wharves; to push out between the breakwaters until the snub nose of the little craft dipped to the short impatient Baltic waves, and the chill of the north, beginning winter, came towards us in petulant icy gusts of wind.

The harbours, of course, had been neglected during the war. There was a great deal of essential repair work to be done, and always heavy maintenance expenses. Sand had silted up, especially at Windau. "We must put our ports to rights," said the chief engineer, "or we shall never get our

foreign trade back." He was a tall man of middle age, careless as to dress, but with the far steady look in his blue eyes that deep-sea sailors have. He saw beyond his harbour.

Water-power was to be exploited. Big shipbuilding projects were afoot. Flax, a solid Lettland asset, must be grown again, and that, amongst other things, meant sail-making. Everywhere the State must assist, practically and directly, with subsidies, and banks prepared to give long credits. Farmers must be helped out in a number of ways,—with loans, sawn timber, bricks at cheap rates, implements, machinery, parts of wheels. Credit, the engineer insisted, not charity. "You must keep up the stimulus to work. On bounty a people goes to pieces." His was a robust and invigorating creed.

"You haven't got the labour," said I, thinking of depopulation figures which had been shown me at Riga.

"We are getting our refugees back," he replied, "and putting them on the land. You see, we have expropriated landlords. Lettland is to be a nation of smallholders, working together on co-operative principles."

Finding that in this harbour engineer I had got hold of a man, like my Libau linen draper, who saw beyond his own immediate concerns, I began to pepper him with questions.

"What about draught horses?" I inquired; "I've hardly seen any."

"The State is establishing breeding stations for draught horses and cattle. We shall import from Scandinavia and America. We are projecting severe measures against horse and cattle thieving."

"Phosphates?"

"The State must help the farmer. These smallholders form groups, centralising up to a final board, which organises distribution of things like agricultural machinery which the land-worker cannot afford to buy. We've got a pre-war system of societies to start with—co-operative credit societies, food distribution societies, farmers' and dairymen's groups. They are the background for future development."

This was roughly, then, the plan of reconstruction. Everything must march warily because there is very little money, and credit on any considerable scale can hardly be expected until that part of Europe has begun seriously to settle down. Once the internal organisation of the State has been put into shape and the ports cleared, international trade may recommence. The first step will be to restore the old recognised exports—dairy produce, timber, flax, hemp, hides, starch, and so forth. Later on this energetic Government hopes to add notably to its list of exports. It believes, for example, in the possibilities of beet sugar. It is essentially a Government of young men with ideas.

The snub-nosed launch swerved from the broad main stream and through a small

canal. From this we slipped into a wooded lake, secluded and beautiful. It was a famous haunt of wild-fowl, and in the past one of Riga's playgrounds. Week-end cottages lay half hidden in the trees, and there was the deserted home of a yacht club. We moored to a perilously dilapidated pier, and wandered into the Riga Zoo, now overgrown and empty. The animals, as in Berlin, had either been eaten or destroyed, because the flesh previously given to them for food was wanted in war-time for human beings. The restaurant pavilion in the centre of the garden looked very forlorn and shabby outside, but the hospitable Government had made a desperate effort for our benefit to revive for one evening its former liveliness. Across the brilliantly lighted hall stretched the buffet, piled with a hundred varieties of cold food, which was now becoming familiar to me. Carloads of officials and their wives had arrived. The attack on the buffet must have resembled that on some German stronghold during the final triumphant "push." Scores of cold pork chops, dozens of slices of smoked fish, slabs of beef and ham, salmon cutlets and cucumbers vanished in a twinkling! Piles of tomatoes, radishes, and salads were levelled to the table before one could say the Lettish version of "Jack Robinson." Everybody drank everybody else's health in copious glasses of schnapps, hock, and claret. No sooner had we eaten (until I, at least, felt that I should never be hungry again) than the piano struck up a rollicking tune, and like magic the floor was cleared for dancing.

And such dancing! None of your languid and sinuous two-steps or dreamy waltzes, but the real national dances, rollicking and graceful at once, vigorous with a veritable frenzy of laughter and gusto! Half official Lettland was out for a sheer schoolboy frolic! Up the sides and down the middle we went, round we swung, twirled in chains, and pranced in hilarious groups! How intoxicating the lilt of the music and the crisp stamping of feet on the boards! From one dance to another we careered uninterruptedly, for the Lett, male or female, having a good time, is inexhaustible, cold pork or no cold pork! We sprang into the air and clapped heels twice before descending. We shouted century-old songs as we stampeded from end to end of the hall. All the boyish glee and simplicity of this race flooded the merry place in sheer jollity of spirit. When at last the time came to make our way back to our launch, I verily believe some felt trepidation as to negotiating the dilapidated jetty. We thronged the deck laughing. Some one suggested continuing the evening at the opera. "If you will let us hear your great national work," said an Englishman gravely to a Cabinet Minister. "What was that?" "Why," the Englishman replied, "'Riga-

Letto,' of course!" And was promptly suppressed in a cabin about as big as sixpence.

Then, suddenly susceptible to new impressions as all imaginative races are, the whole company sat quite quietly on the deck of the little vessel as she slipped homeward through the dim silvery water. Now and then, ghostly and fantastic, the tiny sail of a boat would flit for a moment among the rays of our searchlight. In a sweet plaintive voice a woman began to sing, and soon the company had joined her with tender chorus of the old, old folk-songs that, thrilling through the night, bridge over for this little free people their centuries of servitude, and link them up with the free beginnings of their race.

X.

A wise old diplomat once gave me somewhat unexpected counsel.

"If," said he, "you wish to ascertain the temper and resources of a people, visit its shops and its theatres."

The older school of diplomacy, which has received so many harsh blows during Mr Lloyd George's impressionist régime, believed more in humanity than in statistics. Had there been less of the latter and more of the former in evidence whilst the pundits of the Peace Conference were endeavouring to compose the differences of the world, I think that we who came afterwards to travel in Central and Eastern Europe would have found less restlessness, exasperation, and jealousy. We should not so often have heard the terrible complaint that the simple and direct issues of war were preferable to the anxieties, the muddle, and the hardships of the subsequent peace.

The old diplomat knew his Europe by heart, although he had never managed a railway, presided over a university, founded a newspaper, or exploited a patent medicine. His advice was sound. In the crowded stores of Paris, the Galeries Lafayette, Printemps, Louvre, or Samaritaine, you will, as you observe the shoppers and the nature and method of their buying, learn a good deal of the thrifty temper of reviving France. In the grandiose productions by Reinhardt last summer of spectacular and heroic plays at his vast Berlin circus transformed into a theatre —I saw 'Julius Cæsar' and 'Danton' among others—one could not but feel the response of the audience to the issues shown on the stage,—the crash of dynasties and the calamity of war, the blind intolerance of despotism, but also the slow turning of the wheel of destiny so that no defeat or abasement is final, force succeeds force, and the catastrophe of yesterday may breed the triumph of to-morrow.

Equally the crude and repul-

sive indecency of German music-halls, now even more flagrant than before the war, throws significant light on the moral collapse of German society to-day. I have seen entire families clearly enjoying "turns" of a dirty coarseness, cloaked in the guise of emancipated art, which would paralyse with horror the German *hausfrau* of a generation ago. One wonders what has become of the traditional German family life which, if stolid and uninspiring, was at least clean.

Eastwards from the Vistula shopping is a series of surprises. Some are amusing, others indescribably pathetic. As I found at Memel, nearly every shop has its wealth in its window, and very little reserve in its cupboards. There is but little chance anywhere of "matching" or selection. Take what there is or go without; that is all you can do. When there is no import trade and very little labour or workable plant in the factories, shopkeepers cannot replenish their stocks. All manner of domestic difficulties occur, but the Letts, certainly, are far more likely to meet them with laughter than grumbling. Merriment and the cheerful tackling of daily difficulties seem the normal atmosphere of a Lett family, and I have often hoped that some day there will arise a Lett Mrs Gaskell or Louisa Alcott to portray this family life.

I have visited places where it was easier to buy a bouquet of carnations, or the score of a Bach fugue or a translation of 'Ivanhoe' than a saucepan; easier to decorate your drawing-room for a dance than to find material to keep the rain from coming through the roof. One great garish store there is in Riga which is full of cheap and inexpressibly tawdry goods imported from Germany. Here you may buy, it is asserted, everything from a frying-pan to a ball frock. Desperately short of household gear, the Lett women are buying these German articles of necessity, but they are longing for their own industries to revive and for British manufactured goods to come once more to their shops. With all European nations, they recognise quality and endurance in British work, and it is just these things that in the little Baltic countries are thought of far more highly than mere glitter and smartness. The Lett has instinctive good taste; he detests substitutes and imitations. In that same tawdry store I have heard shabby Lett girls and youths tell each other that they would not be seen dead in the glaring frocks and unutterable "reach-me-downs" that apparently please the sons and daughters of Semitic profiteers in Berlin or Frankfort.

But if the ironmongers and drapers have scant supply, the old curiosity shops are tragically full. Hither, through all these war-torn regions, have come the treasures of countless ancient houses—their old lace and fine brocades, their stately furniture, their porcelain and

jewellery, big dark portraits of ancestors, prints, engravings, household utensils in brass and copper, vases and gay ornaments from great saloons, their formal statuary and quaint filigree fripperies, and, more than all else, their miniatures. In Berlin much of this is, doubtless, loot from French and Belgian chateaux. On the despoiled frontiers of Soviet Russia much of it must be the scattered treasures of aristocrat refugees who, fleeing before a blood-maddened peasantry, left behind them the loved ornaments of their homes, whose beauty their persecutors would be too ignorant to see, and whose associations they would scorn. As the tide of war swayed hither and thither, all this derelict beauty of past stately generations became more and more forlorn. Bundled from ravaged home to ravaged home, from garret to garret, or from dung-heap to dung-heap, it finally found its way into the dingy corners of the old curiosity shops. Tarnished and tattered, it is unutterably desolate now, for it is far beyond possibility to ascertain whence it came or to whom it once belonged. Of its value to collector or bargain-hunter I am not qualified to speak. I have heard of "finds" in miniatures and china. But of the fine and wistful beauty with which these shops are crowded, whatever its intrinsic value, it is difficult to write without emotion, and I have sometimes thought that the old curiosity shops of Central and Eastern Europe offer a revelation of the suffering caused by war nearly as poignant and tragic as the gaping ruins of a destroyed village or the stark desolation of a Flanders battlefield.

The greater part of these household treasures, of course, has found its way into the market simply because of the hardship and impoverishment of war. In these regions the era of great estates has closed as abruptly as one shuts a door in passing from one room to another. It is much easier for a rich man to become poor than for a poor man to become poorer. What tears must have fallen as, one by one, these dainty heirlooms were withdrawn from cabinet or mantelpiece to be sold with all their glow of history and craftsmanship still upon them! I do not suppose even the most exquisite of them fetched much—more than enough to maintain just for a few brief hours longer the stately life which they had so finely graced. In these countries, haggard with the strain and uncertainty of war, neither men nor women dare sink their money in what is merely beautiful. Nor will those countries which have expropriated their landlords ever I think, return to the design and collection of beautiful house adornment. The smallholder will have neither taste nor means for it, and the taste of the well-to-do business classes lies in a different direction. Many of the charming things that now crowd the counters

of these old curiosity shops will prove the last of their kind; the creative impulse will turn more and more to buildings, statuary, and music which all the world can enjoy. The great manor-houses are empty now, and will gradually fall to pieces. The costly and exquisite things with which their owners loved to adorn their homes—and indirectly, by the mere sight of such beauty, their own characters—will never be made again. We have passed to another age.

I should like to save the miniatures. There are hundreds of them in every town and village of the new countries. Some are of royalties and great generals, but the majority are of people whose names we shall never know. There they lie on the shelves in their little gilt frames, and for each face one can imagine a story! Few of the faces are strong according to our notions of strength, but hardly any seem coarse or brutal. Slav, Pole, or Czech, they all reveal the quiet serenity and self-possession of wealthy lives; the women especially seem for the most part calm, competent seventeenth or eighteenth century people whose days went with measured tread. Here and there are dashing cavaliers and roguish beauties of the Court, but for the most part the portraits are of the country aristocracy who spent uneventful days in the great manors, administering estates reckoned by the square mile, and doing it, on the whole, equably and well.

Agricultural countries suffered far less privation during the war than countries mainly industrial. Food and drink are plentiful and relatively cheap, with the exception of imported groceries, which are very scarce. What tea there is comes surreptitiously through Russia, and is extremely good; but, as I shall show in another paper, tea takes but an inconsiderable place in that most enjoyable form of Lettish hospitality officially known as "taking a cup of tea."

Wandering through the quaint old Riga streets one afternoon on the edge of twilight, I paused to study a shop window which resembled in the variety of its exhibits what I believe is known in English villages as a jumble sale. Between a stack of chipped enamelled mugs and a dilapidated violin lay a little panel of miniatures mounted on faded plush. They were of exquisite delicacy.

A Lett acquaintance joined me.

"You are looking at the older generation," he said, "but it has vanished. Come with me to-morrow and see something of our children."

The idea delighted me. Where should we go?

"Into the country," said he, "to a most delightful place."

"What is it called?" said I.

"Jollity Lodge," he replied.

(To be concluded.)

ON HAZARDOUS SERVICE.

BY MERVYN LAMB.

CHAPTER XIV.—SOME UNDERGROUND EXPERIMENTS.

After the abortive attempts to communicate by air with Adrienne, which have already been recorded, Jean spent an uneventful period kicking his heels round Headquarters, and generally becoming thoroughly bored with life. This was nobody's fault in particular, but is merely typical of a soldier's life in war, consisting as it does of periods of almost insupportable strain alternating with almost equally unbearable periods of drudgery or inactivity.

Jean felt this more than most, partly on account of his restless temperament, but also because he was amongst foreigners, and took no interest in the games which have enabled the Britisher to maintain his national characteristics in all climes and circumstances. If it is true that the sun never sets on the British Empire, it is probably equally safe to surmise that some form of ball is always being propelled therein, and that if the British soldier were allowed to follow a football, he would go through hell and hardly notice the temperature. And this is well, for he is called upon to serve in places which appear to be separated only by the proverbial sheet of paper from the infernal regions.

Jean might, of course, have been sent back to "occupied" France by the route which he had followed in his escape, but he had a distinct dislike to the thought of crossing the electrified fence, due chiefly to the memory of the way in which the electrocuted Boche had curled up when he touched it. Apart from this, his characteristics marked him out for more highly specialised "stunts," whilst there were plenty of others available for the ordinary class of risk. The snow which covered the country when the frost came, ruled a landing by aeroplane out of court, as it would prevent the pilot from seeing what he was landing on, and would also greatly assist the enemy in tracking any person who might be landed.

Certain experiments were being carried out, and in the meantime it was decided to explore the possibilities of passing under the enemy's lines.

There were not wanting some of the "oldest inhabitant" class, who graphically described how they had traversed vast distances along subterranean passages connecting, so they said, their own town or village with others now on the far side of the German lines. True,

they had never actually emerged at the other end, but usually only because the candle had gone out after proceeding several miles, or for some similar and adequate reason.

Without being optimistic, these statements merited closer investigation, and since the Allies could not afford to neglect any chance, however faint, much time and labour were devoted to the subject, much to the gratification of the informants, who thereby earned a transient notoriety.

In some cases the reports were substantiated in so far that the entrance was located, usually approached by well-worn steps leading down from the cellar of a church, or more often a monastery, into a well-made passage, but invariably the latter either petered out altogether or merely led to another ecclesiastical establishment.

During certain periods, no doubt, this underground system of communications may have played a leading rôle in preserving the lives of the godly, whilst at other times one might perhaps conjecture that it proved equally convenient as a means of liaison, by which the monotony of monkish existence was materially alleviated. Whether or no this supposition is correct, the conclusion was reluctantly arrived at that as a means of traversing the enemy's lines they were "napoo," and the toothless ones retired into obscurity with a thoroughly unearned douceur.

But an efficient Intelligence Service does not lightly accept defeat or even discouragement, and investigations were promptly commenced in a different direction. As the result of the battle of Loos the opposing lines ran through the very centre of the mining area, and though much damage had been done during that battle and subsequent combats, some of the mining installations had had miraculous escapes. So much so was this the case, that pumps were working and coal was being got out little more than a mile behind the British lines, whilst locomotives were hauling it away in broad daylight behind the shelter of the spoil-heaps and workshops.

These gaunt structures certainly presented rather a woebegone appearance, but from the upper storey, where Jean spent much time, a magnificent view could be obtained of the mining area, including such famous points as the Double Crassier, Hill 70—where some of the earlier New Army Divisions gained immortal glory—Lens, Hulloch, and La Bassée, whilst farther back lay Pont-à-Vendin, and in the distance the stately towers of Lille stood up against the horizon, offering to the British soldier as fair a prospect as the Judæan hills must have presented to Moses from the summit of Mount Pisgah. Like Moses, many there were who saw it from afar, but were destined never to live to enter the promised land. As we have said, the

whole of this area was honeycombed with shafts and galleries, and a close study of the plans of the various systems showed that with very little work it might be possible to get connection with an extensive system on the enemy's side of the lines. There were, however, a great many doubtful questions in the scheme, chief of which was the extent to which the enemy had kept the pumps going, the importance of which will be readily appreciated by every one in England, as it is always a cause of anxiety during the bi-annual coal strike.

As an unsolicited testimonial to German thoroughness, it may not be out of place to remark that their destructive efforts at a later period were so efficient, that the mining area will not be clear of water for probably five years.

At this time, however, the reports tended to show that the Germans had not exercised their talents in this particular direction, and, in fact, there was good reason to suppose that they were doing everything possible to preserve such a valuable source of fuel for their own needs.

A point was selected in a high-level gallery where the boring of a barrier only some eighteen feet thick would effect connection with a similar gallery in the adjacent system, and no time was lost in making preparations for tunnelling through, though there was naturally much anxiety as to whether a flood of water would not burst through and sweep the miners away.

The barrier or partition-wall lay slightly to the other side of the trench line, and the Germans had wrecked the intervening *fosses*, throwing machinery and winding-gear down the shafts, so that it was a matter of extreme difficulty to reach the selected spot; and there was always the danger that the enemy might make it impossible to return by adding some bombs to the collection of débris. However, British Tunnelling Companies were accustomed to working in conditions where a matter of minutes or even seconds might just make the difference between whether they or the enemy were blown into eternity, and they entered on this particular job *con amore*.

To cut a long story short, the barrier was pierced and no rush of water followed, so the first step was successfully accomplished, the principal *dramatis personæ*, besides the miners, being a French foreman and a young Intelligence Officer, whilst Jean, who fortunately knew the mining area fairly well in pre-war days, was to be the actual person to break ground on the other side.

In the meantime he divided his time between going down the mine to get accustomed to the conditions, and in studying the country from the ruined workshops and from the map.

A preliminary reconnaissance

of the farther system showed that no work was being done in that portion nearest to the British lines, and, moreover, that the deeper galleries were quite impassable owing to water and local collapses; and the problem was thus narrowed down to emerging by one of three shafts, two of which were somewhat too close to the enemy's lines to be comfortable, whilst the third, and most remote, might prove to be inaccessible; and it was to clear up this point that the Foreman, the Intelligence Officer, and Jean started out one morning.

It took them several hours to reach the first shaft, at the bottom of which there was a certain amount of débris, but not sufficient to prevent them reaching the foot of an iron ladder-way which ran upwards towards the top.

The second was in much the same condition; but on advancing farther towards the third they found that the gallery began to dip, and they were eventually brought to a full stop by water.

They returned, therefore, to the bottom of the second shaft, and sat down to wait for darkness before commencing the ascent of the ladder, listening all the time attentively for any sounds of activity above.

And before very long, from the voices which reached them, it was clear that there were Germans at the top; and they therefore moved back to shaft number one, which was now the last hope, and being the nearest to the trench line, the most unfavourably situated of the three.

In fact, the Foreman was for abandoning the enterprise altogether; but the Intelligence Officer, fired with the enthusiasm of youth, persuaded him to stay, as without him they could not have found their way back again.

It was nearly midnight when the young officer, closely followed by Jean, commenced the tiring ascent, and they were within some twenty feet of the surface when the leader suddenly found his hand encounter the side of the shaft instead of the next rung in the ladder. He reached up as high as he could, but still no ladder, for the simple reason that the Germans had adopted the obvious expedient of removing the top twenty feet and so effectively preventing its use by the enemy. However, he was unaware of this, and commenced to flash his torch upwards along the sides of the shaft to see if there was any means of making farther progress; and this nearly put an abrupt termination to two promising careers, for the torch illuminated the structure over the pit-head, which immediately caught the eye of the German sentry at the top. He shouted to the picket, and as the officer and Jean commenced to retire rapidly, several Germans came to the edge, and one flashed a torch downwards, the light of which fortunately did not quite reach our friends. One of the men, probably the

picket commander, shouted out something, and shortly after a heavy object whizzed past them, and striking the sides of the shaft at intervals, finally burst some seconds later far below them with what sounded like a terrific explosion.

The two stopped and flattened themselves against the ladder, whilst more stick grenades followed. This fusilade lasted for some minutes, and then, either because they were satisfied that any one at the bottom must have been annihilated, or because their ammunition was exhausted, the bombardment ceased; and after an interval, Jean and the officer ventured to continue the descent, anxiously wondering whether anything beyond a few mangled remains would be left of the Foreman, whom they had left at the bottom.

The latter, indeed, though still conscious, was apparently severely injured. His injuries would have been worse had he not, after the first bomb, managed to crawl behind some wreckage which had protected him from the subsequent explosions; and the two lost no time in getting him to a safer place, in case a fresh shower of grenades should be precipitated upon them. Having rendered first aid to the best of their ability, they anxiously discussed what was the best course to take, and came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to stay where they were and wait for the search party, which would probably be sent out when they failed to return; and eventually they were rescued some twenty-four hours later.

But this experience showed that the Germans were fully alive to the possibility of using the mines as a means of communication; and it was decided, to the intense satisfaction of Jean and the secret disappointment of the young Intelligence Officer, who had had visions of winning great renown, that the chapter of mining enterprises should be definitely closed, and Jean was sent to England, where the experiments already referred to were nearing completion.

CHAPTER XV.—ADRIFT.

Jean found his new occupation a decidedly chilly one during the winter days, though it had distinct advantages from that point of view over aeroplaning, and he soon began to take a keen interest in what he had hitherto regarded much in the same light as a cricketer looks upon croquet. If you could manage to keep your feet warm it was quite delightful sailing peacefully along, without a perfect hurricane from a propeller trying to take the hair off your head. Then, when you arrived, there was the excitement of finding out

where you had arrived, and the easiest way of getting back again to the place you had started from. The instructor, too, was a delightful fellow, like most people who have followed the sea, and a real enthusiast to boot; and Jean could not help admiring his devil-may-care, sink-or-swim outlook on life, and the light-hearted spirit in which he bumped into things which happened to get in the way, though the Frenchman occasionally had some anxious moments before the roars of laughter of his mentor reassured him that they were still alive.

However, generally speaking, the companionship did a great deal to restore his morale, and to remove the unpleasant impression left on his mind by experiences such as the electrified fence and the coal-mine. When they were not on tour, he worked very hard learning the ins-and-outs of certain mechanical contrivances, which were by no means easy to master.

It was not until the beginning of March that the party had completed its preparations and was ready for the fray, when the whole outfit was transported to a special camp some fifteen miles behind the British lines, where it was duly equipped with motor transport by the local William Whiteley, otherwise known as "Q."

The weather remained unfavourable for some time, but eventually the south-westerly wind, for which they had been waiting, made an attempt possible, and the little camp became a scene of great activity.

In the first place, instruments were set up in position some distance apart, and small balloons of the type which were frequently found behind the British lines, carrying little electric lights and dry batteries, were filled and sent aloft, carefully followed by the observers at the instruments so long as they were in sight. The object of all this was, of course, precisely that for which the enemy adopted similar measures—viz., to ascertain the strength and direction of the wind, and it was followed by careful plotting on a map. As a result, it was calculated that the "kick off" should take place at a spot fifteen miles to the south of the camp, and shortly afterwards a party, including Jean, left in three motor lorries for the rendezvous.

Arrived there the instruments were again set up, and the small balloons were despatched as before, whilst the leading lorry disgorged an inchoate mass, which proved to be an empty spherical balloon, and the second a number of long hydrogen cylinders for inflating the same. As darkness fell, acetylene flares were lighted, which showed up the great globe gradually swelling until it lifted the small basket-work car clear of the ground, and had to be held down by the fatigue party on the guys. By 10.30 P.M., the time fixed for the start, all was ready, and the final tests

showed that the direction of the wind had remained steady, though its strength had somewhat increased.

This, however, was immaterial, as it only meant a slight shortening of the time of flight in order to achieve the same object. Certainly the night was not ideal, as the clouds were somewhat low, obscuring a quarter moon; but this had its advantages, as it precluded any possibility of being observed when crossing the trench lines.

Jean received some final instructions from a Staff Officer, and carefully adjusted a luminous chronometer strapped across his forearm. Then he wrapped something round his waist, placed a small but heavy square box and some sandbags in the car, tested certain strings, and finally got in himself.

The Staff Officer and then his old instructor shook Jean warmly by the hand, bidding him *bon voyage*, the men on the guys let go, and the great balloon shot up silently into the night, vanishing like a wraith in the direction of the enemy's lines, followed by a spontaneous and wholly unauthorised cheer from the fatigue party.

Jean, crouching in the car, soon found that he could see nothing on the ground beyond the confused lights of the camps, the more symmetrically arranged flares on the aerodromes to guide any wandering 'planes, and an occasional car crawling like a glowworm along some highroad. Gradually these died away as he got nearer to the front, and to his astonishment he failed to observe the opposing lines, which on previous occasions had been clearly marked by a veritable pyrotechnic display of artillery and Very lights. As a matter of fact, this part of the front was in motion owing to the German retirement towards the Hindenburg Line, and there would have been little to see except the flashes of the few guns, which bickered at rare intervals throughout the night.

He looked at his watch, and found that though more than an hour had elapsed, he had still a long time to go before he descended. There was absolutely nothing to be seen above or below him, and he had no idea of his height; but when he suddenly drifted into a cold damp fog, he knew he was in the clouds, and that it would be well to come down out of them, or he might get into a wrong air-current. He therefore let out some gas, possibly too much, or else the wet fog weighted down the balloon, for before he knew where he was, he found himself close to the ground and almost into a wood. Over went some sandbags, and he cleared the trees comfortably; but he had to sacrifice nearly all his ballast to get up again to what he considered a reasonable height above a village, where lights were still visible, showing that it was in German occupation, and probably well behind the lines.

It seemed to him that he was travelling at a considerably faster rate than he had previously imagined, but this might, of course, be an optical delusion, owing to his being so close to the ground. In any case it was not going to be an easy matter to get out of the balloon, even if he pulled the ripping panel; and he certainly did not want to do that, as the deflated balloon would be the most damning evidence of his whereabouts next morning. During the next half-hour, as he sat shivering in the car, the more he thought about it the less he liked it, and he could only hope that he would have the luck to strike an open space with no trees. He comforted himself with the reflection that there was always more cultivation than woods; but it was a positive relief when his watch showed him that the time had come for the final act, and he pulled the string to let out gas, at the same time peering anxiously down into the darkness. For a time he could see nothing, but gradually a dark mass took shape below him—was it earth or trees? Another second or two and doubt had vanished—it was trees! He jettisoned his last sandbag and just scraped over them. Oh, joy! a little distance beyond them was a perfectly level expanse, which looked admirably suited for landing. He seized the square box and prepared to jump, the balloon dropping all the time; now he was only a few feet above it: horrors! it was water! There was nothing for it, and the all-important box hit the surface with a mighty splash, as the balloon, relieved of some 30 lb. weight, shot up aloft.

It was a disaster from every point of view at the time, but even this particular cloud has a silver lining, for the box probably lies buried to this day in the mud beneath the turgid waters of the Scheldt, and consequently it is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with a secret which, unlike most war secrets, is not yet public property, and may therefore be of some use in the future.

As the water disappeared from view with the rapid rise of the balloon, Jean began furiously to think what his next step was to be. A decision was not difficult, since, assuming that the Staff Officer's calculations had been approximately correct, every minute was taking him farther away from the point which he had started out to reach.

There had evidently been a mistake of some kind, or else he had nearly dropped into entirely fresh inundations, because he could not remember anything of a big sheet of water near the intended landing-place. Then he remembered the speed at which he had passed over the village, and decided that in all probability he had already overshot the mark, so without further delay he proceeded to come down. Without the precious box the task of leaving the

car was considerably simplified, and this time he had better luck, for when he jumped he landed in a ploughed field. History does not relate what happened to the balloon after Jean saw it disappear into the darkness, though this very question was discussed with some merriment by the Staff Officer and the Mariner, the former being of opinion that it would come down near the German training camp at Beverloo and frighten the recruits, whilst the latter favoured the idea of its dropping behind the mine-fields in the Bight, and creating alarm and despondency amongst the High Seas Fleet sheltering therein. No doubt both were wrong, but it is fairly certain that it created a nine days' wonder somewhere.

Later on, when the intensive propaganda campaign started, derelict balloons must have become as common as blackberries, and a positive nuisance to the German Intelligence Service.

It must be explained that Jean's instructions were to get in touch with friends in Cambrai, with a view to organising a system of watching the road and rail communications centring in that town, and by which it might be expected that German reinforcements would arrive as soon as Allenby's great attack started, and such movements were to be duly reported by means of the square box. Without the latter the whole scheme fell to the ground, and Jean lost no time in disposing of the remainder of the apparatus, which he still carried on his person, feeling all the time supremely foolish to have undertaken such risks for absolutely no result, his only remaining means of communication being one miserable pigeon by which he was to announce his arrival. That must wait till morning, and in the meantime he made his way back up wind on the chance of striking some familiar landmark until he was brought up short by water. Edging round it, he proceeded until he found himself in long grass, apparently on a narrow spit of land with water in every direction, so far as he could see. It seemed useless to wander about any more in the darkness, and he decided to lie up where he was, since it appeared to be the kind of spot which no one but a lunatic would be likely to visit. In the distance he could hear a faint rumble of artillery, and judged that he was a considerable distance behind the lines. Then he went to sleep.

It was daylight when he woke, chilled to the bone, and he now saw that he was on the northern edge of a series of marshes and lakes, which could only be the valley of either the Sensée or the Scheldt, and therefore a considerable distance beyond Cambrai, so that his surmise as to the increased speed at which the balloon had been travelling had been correct.

There did not seem to be much point in going to Cambrai in the circumstances; in fact, he felt at a thoroughly

loose end, and like most people in similar circumstances, conceived a longing to see once more his old home and the scene of his past exploits, with its familiar faces, more particularly Adrienne, who would be able to tell him all the news. Between them they might be able to fix up something which would be useful to the Allies, if not exactly what he had been sent to do.

After a careful look round he wrote a message informing *le Commandant* in guarded terms of what had happened and what he intended to do, and sent off the bird, which, as a matter of fact, reached its destination.

Shortly after he had done this a little girl appeared in sight, driving some cattle down to feed in the grass by the marshes; and having watched her for some time, Jean crawled through the grass, and taking cover behind a cow, accosted her. The maiden was at first somewhat taken aback, but on his explaining that he was a prisoner of war who had escaped from *les Boches*, she at once assumed the attitude of the little mother, promising solemnly to keep his secret, and intensely proud at being able to do something to spite the hated Hun and help a fellow-countryman in distress.

From her he learnt that Cambrai was about eight miles to the south-west, that she herself lived near Bouchain, and she explained how he could get across the marshes and the Scheldt, avoiding the main bridges, which were usually guarded. Jean was now sufficiently oriented, so he bade good-bye to the little maiden, and started to work his way cautiously in the direction she had indicated.

All went well, and it was just getting dark when he reached the little white cottage on the outskirts of a hamlet, which she had accurately described, and where her married sister lived, whose husband was in the French Army. Jean opened the door and walked straight in, to the consternation of a young woman who was attending to a child of some three summers, apparently the only other occupant of the cottage.

The child set up a yell, but was quickly quieted by an energetic "Tais-toi, Ferdinand!" from his mother. Jean explained that he had been directed to her by Marguerite, and once her fears were set at rest, she was as anxious as her little sister to help him.

She explained that there were Germans in the village, mostly engaged on water transport work on the Scheldt, by which means very large quantities of stores were brought up to the German Army. Her boat had been commandeered, unfortunately; but these Germans were a poor lot, and she thought they could get hold of one without any great difficulty, and she would bring it back again, so that there should be no trace of any one having used it during the night.

Whilst they were discussing

this point, steps were heard outside, and she motioned Jean to get under the bed destined apparently for Ferdinand, and Jean was barely in concealment before an elderly German entered with a polite "Bon soir, Madame." His errand apparently was merely to acquire eggs, and he made himself comfortable in a chair, preparatory to discussing the question at some length. The young woman replied that she had not got any, and went on with her preparations to put the boy to bed, whispering fiercely to that hero to keep his mouth shut, and in a perfect agony lest he should make some naïve remark about their visitor, who had the strange fancy to lie under his bed in preference to sitting in a chair.

Then, as the German showed no signs of leaving, she at last left Ferdinand and fetched two eggs from the other room, which she presented to the German, asking him at the same time to come outside, so that the child could get to sleep.

After some desultory conversation at the front door the German eventually left, with the impression that the young woman was an extremely pleasant person, and that he had made a sufficiently favourable impression to justify a repetition of his visit.

Jean then emerged, and they continued the discussion of their plans for the night. He offered to swim across, but she would not hear of it; then he suggested that he should take the boat across and just abandon it on the other side. It was altogether too much to ask her to leave the child alone in the cottage at night, with no certainty of getting back to it; but she was quite clear that when Ferdinand grew older he would be proud to have played his small part in helping a prisoner; and as it was obviously better that the boat should be replaced, Jean rather reluctantly eventually agreed to her plan.

Late that night the two stole down to the water's edge. The wind had died away and a heavy mist hung in the valley over the river through which they could see several big barges tied up to the tow-path. If there were any Germans aboard they appeared to be asleep, for there was no sign of life, and after watching for some time Jean decided to cut out the only small boat visible, which was tied to the far side of the stern of one of the barges.

Taking off his boots he stole up the gangway, listening attentively. From below came the sounds of heavy breathing, but still nothing stirred, and he crept along to the stern and peered down into the boat to see if there was any means of propelling it. It was empty, and he surmised that the oars must be somewhere on board the barge, probably down below. A careful search on the deck, however, disclosed a punt-pole, which would do equally well as there was practically no current, and Jean drove

this into the mud between the stern of the barge and the bank. Then he cast off the boat and brought it to the bank, tying it to the pole, after which he crept down the gangway again, and the two got into the boat and pushed quietly out into the stream. As they punted across they expected every moment to be challenged; but nothing happened, and Jean was soon making his way towards the highroad to Solesmes, having begged his fair confederate not to attempt the difficult and dangerous task of restoring the boat and pole to their former position—advice which she entirely disregarded, and, strange to relate, with no untoward consequences, for, as she had said, these particular Germans were a poor lot.

This brave woman does not appear again in this narrative, but Ferdinand must by now be a big boy of six or seven; and though his share in the business was only that of sleeping partner, he did it well, and it is permissible to hope that his war record is taken into consideration when the village *gamins* elect the captain of the pirate crew, which annually hoists the skull and crossbones at the masthead of a plank raft on the Scheldt during the summer holidays.

CHAPTER XVI.—A REUNION.

Jean had had a good meal, and the young woman had provided him with ample *provision de voyage*, so that as he made his way across country, keeping parallel to the road, he felt in excellent spirits, and promised himself that when he found Adrienne they would do something big between them, though he did not quite know what. As he gradually left the valley of the Scheldt and got up on to the higher ground, all the time carefully avoiding the villages, the air grew fresher and clearer, and when, at about 3 A.M., he reached the main Cambrai-Le Cateau road, the stars were shining clear in the sky, and he trod well-known ground with all the confidence of a ghillie returning to his native moor. The country, which was wide, open, rolling fields, with no hedges or cover of any kind outside the vicinity of the villages, though excellent for night marching, was not the place to be caught in in daylight, and he decided to push on to some excellent covers which he knew of, about five or six miles farther south, and from which another night's journey would enable him to reach his own village. He had calculated that he could get to the woods comfortably before daylight, provided all went well, but unfortunately he ran into a column on the march, and lost nearly an hour whilst waiting for it to clear his front.

Consequently, when he reached the vicinity of the wood for which he was making, he was distinctly pushed for time, as

the stars were already paling in the first early light of dawn. There was a village about half a mile from the wood, so in case any of the villagers should be early astir, he made a detour to enter it on the far side. Had he not been in such a hurry he might have noticed indications of impending work, such as pegs and tracing-tape, and guessed that this particular wood was not a very safe place for a fugitive.

Quite unconscious of this fact, he selected a spot well in the middle of the wood amongst rhododendron bushes, which seemed to afford ample cover, and settled himself down for the day.

Before he had been there very long, however, he was roused by the sound of a number of people advancing apparently along a path which ran close to his lair. In a moment he was all attention, but was somewhat relieved to hear as they approached that they were talking French.

He crawled to the edge of the bushes, whence he could get a partial view of the procession, and saw a large party of all ages, men and women, carrying picks, shovels, hatchets, &c., behind them a dozen German soldiers fully armed, and last of all an officer, who was apparently in charge of the whole party.

Jean could not see the faces of the civilians, as they were proceeding in more or less of a mob; but suddenly his heart gave a jump as his eyes lighted on the back view of a trim figure which seemed familiar. She had passed before he could see her face, but there is usually something distinctive about a person's walk and the carriage of the head, and Jean felt almost certain that it was Adrienne.

What on earth was she doing here, so far from home, and how was he to get into touch with her?

He watched the last soldier disappear, and then, leaving his concealment, followed the party by a series of rapid dashes from cover to cover. His last advance nearly landed him in trouble, for the party had been halted and was being distributed for work, the majority apparently extended along the edge of the wood by which he had entered. He could see very little and had to go by the sounds; but at least one German, presumably a works overseer, was shouting out orders and instructions in villainous French, and some of the armed soldiers would probably be placed outside the wood to prevent any straying from the working party. His next move was not clear, but he thought that when work was in full swing he might have a better chance of finding Adrienne, if indeed it was she.

Then the sounds of chopping seemed to be coming in his direction, and he began to wonder whether it would not be safer to withdraw, but decided to take the chance that it might be some one who could give him information, and he stayed where he was.

The worker was humming a tune, and though Jean was the class of person who is only quite certain that the band is playing "God Save the King" when the audience stands up, this particular noise seemed somehow to be familiar to him, though he had not the vaguest idea what the tune was.

Then the person moved away, and Jean worked his way forward to the very edge of his cover, hoping that whoever it was would return. To his delight she did so, and in answer to a low whistle, Adrienne presently joined him, her eyes shining with delight, but otherwise, so it seemed to him, only a shadow of her former self.

"How on earth did you get here?" she whispered; and she punctuated the recital of his midnight voyage with exclamations of wonder, and a deep sigh of regret when he came to the tragedy of the square box.

With a slightly heightened colour she asked him how "Monsieur Archaire" was, and her face fell when Jean had to confess that he had not the faintest idea, for he had not seen that young officer since the abortive flight which they had made together to try and reach the rendezvous with Adrienne.

She did not pursue the subject further, nor was she at all communicative about her own experiences, as she insisted, with her usual common-sense, that the important thing at the moment was to make some plan for the future, since they could not stay indefinitely in the bushes where they were then concealed.

Jean proposed that he should go on down to see Grand'mère, and there work out a plan for getting her away; but Adrienne did not think that this would help matters much, and made the following alternative suggestion.

They had only been one day in their present place, and the new guard, which had taken over the party on its arrival, did not know its members personally by sight, and merely counted heads to see if all were present.

Supposing Jean was to change places with Jaspar: would they not then be able to mature plans for the future at leisure? There would be no great difficulty in making their escape whenever they wanted to, but it was no use doing so unless they had a clear idea of what they intended to do afterwards. That could not be decided in five minutes, and in the meantime Jaspar could go down to the village and find out how things were going there, and whether there were any of their friends still left at large who would be of any use to the cause. There was, of course, the chance that some member of the labour gang might observe the substitution and denounce Jean to the Germans; but, fortunately, they were split up in different billets, and she thought her own party in the barn were all reliable.

If Jean agreed she would go

and warn Jaspar at once, and make a plan for the two to change places; meantime he should stay where he was.

It was not very easy getting to Jaspar, as he was working at a trench a little way off her beat; but she gradually edged down in his direction, and had actually given him his instructions before the overseer, who fancied himself as a wit, observed their conversation. "What are you doing down there, you brazen-faced slut?" he roared. "Can't you keep away from the men, even during the daytime?"

Adrienne, scarlet in the face, withdrew in as dignified a manner as the circumstances permitted, followed by the sympathetic glances of the workers who had heard the insult; but though boiling with indignation, they did not, of course, dare to show their feelings.

However, Jaspar was now fully apprised of the situation, and would take the first opportunity of slipping away either during the day or on their homeward journey. The roll was usually called before they marched off, and again when they got into camp, and it was for Adrienne to let Jean know according to circumstances when to join the gang, so that the number should be correct on both occasions.

Obviously the later the change could be postponed the better, and actually Jaspar was still in his place when the gang was collecting tools prior to assembling for the first roll-call. It was getting dusk, and the officer was standing waiting for the party to collect, whilst the overseer, who had insulted Adrienne, was cursing the workmen and telling them to be quick.

Adrienne, with incredible boldness, went up to the officer and said, "Monsieur le Hauptmann, is it your wish that a *sous-officier* should insult a poor French girl for no reason?"

The remainder of the party gasped with astonishment at such unheard-of temerity, and waited, expecting the skies to fall; but instead the German mildly asked her who it was that had insulted her, and then shouted to the offender to come at once.

By this time all eyes were watching the unusual drama, and as the overseer left to go to the officer, Jaspar seized the opportunity to slip away, and was soon changing clothes with Jean.

Meanwhile Adrienne, with astonishing coolness, was confronting the overseer, who was torn between rage at this unexpected attack and fear of offending his officer, for he could only account for the latter's attitude on the assumption that he took more than a friendly interest in the pretty girl, according to the custom of German officers in back areas. On any other supposition it was inconceivable that she should have had the audacity to accuse him in the way she had done. He therefore first attempted to deny that he had said anything at which to take offence; but Adrienne appealed to others of

the party to confirm her statement, and taking courage in numbers and the gathering gloom, they unanimously supported her. The overseer then fell back on the excuse that she had left her duty and was wasting her own time and that of the men working on the trench. The argument waxed hot, and finally the officer cut short the discussion by shouting to the party to fall in, but not before Adrienne had observed the arrival of Jean in the background.

When the roll was called, the latter boldly answered to the name Desgoutte, and the party marched off back to the village, Adrienne wondering how long it would be before the officer commenced to make advances or the overseer contrived to get his own back, and determined to anticipate either event by severing her connection with the gang at an early date.

Jaspar was to come back as soon as possible and to get into the barn sometime during the day when the gang was away at work, since it was possible that all the cover in the wood might have been removed by that time.

In the interval Adrienne and Jean were making plans for the future, and in this they were assisted by a girl of good family, named Lucille de ——. She had been one of a band of patriots in Lille, engaged for more than a year in hiding and feeding several hundred French Territorials, who had concealed themselves when Lille surrendered after a short bombardment in 1914, and many of whom had subsequently escaped to Holland and so rejoined the French Army. Some of the leaders in this patriotic organisation had been arrested and shot shortly before Lucille was deported; but there still remained others, notably a distinguished ecclesiastic, of whom more anon.

Lucille's mother was in Paris, but an invalid sister was still living in the family house, and she suggested that they might be able to do some good work there, and in any case would probably be safer in a large town like Lille than almost anywhere else in the occupied territory, once they could get there, though this might not be easy.

Our two friends thought there might be a good deal in the idea, but before coming to a final decision in the matter preferred to wait until Jaspar got back, when they would be in a better position to judge whether there was anything to be done nearer their own home, for the French, and particularly the agricultural classes, are highly conservative in such matters.

The question of covering their tracks was carefully debated. In Jean's case there was no difficulty, since Jaspar would naturally step into his place again; but how to conceal the fact of Adrienne's departure was a problem which entirely baffled them.

They had a bad fright, too, when, on the third morning

after Jaspar's departure, they heard that their camp was ready and that they would all be going into it on the following day. Jaspar was due to return, but if they did not find him in the barn when they got back from work that evening, their whole plan would have to be recast.

Fortunately the necessity for this did not arise, as he was up to time, and was hiding under some straw in a corner when they re-entered the barn that evening.

After the guards had settled down, the three discussed their plans far into the night. Jaspar brought news that the inhabitants were being evacuated to the rear from villages only a little nearer the front than their own, and Grand'mère expected to follow soon; that the whole place was swarming with troops, and that their old haunts were much too near the front to give them any chance of working for the Allies with any possibility of success, and he begged them not to think of it. Reluctantly they came to the conclusion that he was right, and this threw them back finally on to Lucille's plan.

CHAPTER XVII.—THE ESCAPE.

Next morning when the gang filed out for work and collected in the centre of the village preparatory to marching off, Jean and Adrienne remained hidden under the straw in a large farm wain behind the barn, into which they had crept during the night, and which, so they had observed, had not been touched for several days. Their plan was to get away during the day, when everybody with the exception of the bedridden was out working in the fields, and they thought the waggon was less likely to be searched than the barn when Adrienne was missed.

In the meantime, the roll was being called under the superintendence of a new officer, a Lieutenant. Jaspar, who had observed this immediately he reached the assembly place, and who, in response to his question as to what had happened to "Le Hauptmann," had received the laconic reply, "Parti," now had a brainwave.

When Adrienne's name was called, there was of course a dead silence. The overseer looked up and shouted her name again, and receiving no reply, asked if any one knew where she was.

Then a voice came from the rear rank, "Demandez au Hauptmann," which provoked a titter all down the line, joined in even by the German guard, for this was a jest which appealed equally to both nationalities. The overseer, scowling, said something in German to the Lieutenant to the effect that he had always suspected something fishy in that quarter, and that the "Hauptmann" had probably

taken her away with him to Valenciennes. He would have liked to add, "more fool he," but was not sure how the Lieutenant would take it, so refrained.

And this theory was apparently accepted, at any rate for the time, as a satisfactory explanation for her disappearance; and, moreover, it was obviously a matter into which a junior officer would be unwise to inquire further, though, of course, neither Jean nor Adrienne, listening anxiously in the waggon, were aware of the manner in which a kind fate had befriended them.

As a matter of fact, they soon had sufficient anxieties of their own to prevent them thinking of anything else, for people came into the yard, and after some discussion in French, proceeded to hook in horses, and without its contents being examined, the waggon eventually rumbled out into the road. This was an unexpected development, which might or might not turn out to their advantage.

Their presence must soon be discovered, and the question was whether the owner of the waggon would have the pluck to stand by them, or would denounce them to the Germans. The two could bring to their aid three powerful inducements —viz., patriotism, money, and, in the last resort, Jean's pistol —but it would be very unfortunate if they had to use the last alternative. It was soon to be settled, for, as the waggon left the village, a youth who had been walking beside the horses clambered up over the back, and nearly trod on Jean's face in making his way to join an elderly woman who was sitting at the front.

"Hist!" said Jean, as the lad was just about to shout out something; "do you want to earn fifty francs?"

The woman looked round, and Jean signed to her to go straight on without looking round, at the same time unostentatiously letting her see the muzzle of the pistol which he had in his hand. Petrified with fear, she obeyed, whilst Jean entered into negotiations with the lad; but as he soon found that the woman was the senior partner in the firm, he told the lad to change places with her. She appeared to be one of the large and growing class of French peasants who were thoroughly cowed and ready to take the line of least resistance. Had our friends asked her to smuggle them out of the village, she would undoubtedly have refused; but Jean pointed out that she had actually done so, and the Germans would never believe that she had not been an accessary before the fact. Between them they finally convinced her that her safest plan would be to finish the job and say nothing about it, and the promise of one hundred francs removed any last doubts on the point.

She was taking the straw out to sell it to a neighbouring farmer who lived some three miles away. What sort of a man was he? "Oh, très

patriote"; he had two sons in the French Army, one of whom had been *décoré*.

Were there any Germans about his farm? She did not think so, as it was rather too much off the main road for the rank and file, and not a good enough house to attract an officer.

She was anxious to get rid of the fugitives as soon as possible; but as the country was open and devoid of cover, they insisted that they would go to the farm and nowhere else, and seeing that she was in the position of a dog with a flea on its back which declines to quit, she had to agree. Thus they eventually left the main road, and proceeded by a track to the farm in question, stopping in a big courtyard surrounded by farm buildings, where the usual filthy pond was surrounded by an accumulation of manure which gave rich promise for the future.

The farmer was not visible at the moment, so Jean and Adrienne betook themselves to the upper storey of a barn, whence they could obtain a good view of the courtyard, having handed over the one hundred francs to the old woman, with the knowledge that, once she had got rid of her uninvited guests, she was not in the least likely to make trouble for herself by letting any one know about her share in their escape, or allowing the lad to do so.

The farmer, a tired, elderly man, eventually made his appearance, and the straw was unloaded into the lower half of the barn which our friends were occupying; but it was only after the waggon had left that they attracted his attention. He immediately came up the ladder, and to cut a long story short, expressed his willingness to help them, though he was evidently very nervous as to the consequences, and not at all confident as to his ability to do so, for his only carriage horse had been commandeered, and he had no permission to go more than a few miles from his farm, being somewhat suspect owing to his sons being in the French Army and his well-known patriotism.

In any case, it was between sixty and seventy miles to Lille, and how could Mademoiselle, who looked tired and ill, possibly cover the distance in less than three or four days, or rather nights? and then her boots did not look as if they would stand much more walking.

These remarks evidently put an idea in Jean's head, for he asked whether any motors or lorries ever used the main road near the farm. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, with some details, he slapped his chest, and asked: "Why should these cursed Boche swine flaunt about the roads in autos, when French ladies have to trudge along in the mud, and in their own country too? It's quite time this was changed," said he, "and it is I, Jean Bart, who will set the example. How do I propose to do it?" and he was quite

unconscious of plagiarism when he added, "Qui vivra, verra," or in the language of statecraft, "Wait and see!"

Though he asked a good many questions, they could get nothing more out of him, beyond the fact that he and Adrienne would start at 9 P.M., and probably not return that night. They would require food for two days, a couple of lanterns, and a suit belonging to one of the farmer's absent sons for Adrienne, which that worthy went away to collect, the clothes being asked for with the idea that Adrienne's description might already have been circulated by the Germans.

When he had departed Jean unfolded his scheme, and got Adrienne, who, from longer experience, was the more proficient linguist, to give him some simple lessons, and eventually she pronounced his accent as being sufficiently correct for the purpose. She also made two masks from the skirt of her dress, and when the clothes arrived, and the change had been completed behind some bundles of hay, she smilingly surveyed herself, regretting that "Monsieur Archaire" was not there to see how nice she looked in them. At the appointed time they left, and made their way to a point on the road where it turned a corner.

Adrienne took up her position about 200 yards away on the side from which the motors generally came, and Jean went just round the corner, where he could see Adrienne across the intervening field, both taking cover in a shallow ditch behind a bank which bordered the road. They lighted their lamps and put them in the ditch, carefully concealing the light.

The car for which they were waiting was an open one, and the arrangement was that Adrienne, by means of her lamp, would signal to Jean the number of people in it, so far as she could see as it passed her, and he would then hold it up, if there were not more than two occupants.

A motor convoy first rumbled past from Jean's direction, and it was not till about 11 P.M. that Adrienne heard a single motor coming towards her, which, from the fact that it had pneumatic tyres, she judged might be the right one. The car was moving comparatively slowly, and as it passed she put her head over the bank, and saw that there was one, or possibly two men in front—she could not clearly distinguish which, but undoubtedly the back seats were empty. So as to be on the safe side, she showed her light twice, on which Jean jumped up and placed his lantern in the middle of the road, himself taking cover behind a tree some ten yards short of it.

The driver, coming round the corner, suddenly saw the lantern, put his brakes on, and with true German obedience to authority, stopped dead in reply to a loud "Halt!" not unnaturally thinking it was an Examining Post of some kind.

Before they had realised their mistake—for there were two men in the car—a torch flashed on them from behind, and they were looking down the muzzle of a pistol held by a masked man, which decided them to obey the order, "Hands up," delivered in Jean's best German.

When Adrienne, also wearing a mask, came up, she removed the carbine from between the knees of the man beside the driver, and got into the back seat, pressing the muzzle into the small of his back, whilst Jean, pistol in hand, superintended the restarting of the motor by the other man.

They were then told to take off their long coats, and when our friends were dressed in these, surmounted by trench helmets which they found in the car, the whole turn-out presented an eminently martial appearance. One of the Germans could speak French sufficiently well to understand that they were to drive through Solesmes for Valenciennes, and that if the car failed to get past any Examining Posts *en route*, the first casualties would not be French but German.

One of the men, not the driver, was discarded minus his boots some fifteen miles farther on in a lonely part of the road, miles from anywhere; and partly, perhaps, owing to the inclemency of the weather, they had no difficulty of any description until entering Valenciennes, where they were stopped by a picket, who emerged shivering into the wet snow, which was falling on them as on Allenby's cavalry thirty miles away to the west.

The driver's intelligence, however, was distinctly sharpened by the knowledge that, under the rug, a pistol was pointing at the small of his back; and not being in any way a hero, he satisfied the picket commander, whose chief preoccupation was to get back to his warm room, that the occupants were two sleepy officers, straight from the trenches, going to Brussels to report on urgent business, and the car was soon heading north again.

The last tin of petrol was put into the tank in the middle of the Forêt de Raines, and the driver was shortly after abandoned, also minus his boots, and after he had given full information as to the best road for Ath. The car itself was driven by Jean a short way farther in that direction and then left in a ditch; the two then doubled back on their tracks, and by daylight were with friends less than ten miles from Lille, which they entered safely on the following afternoon, thanks to the assistance of one of the patriots, whose address had been given by Lucille.

There they found a temporary asylum in the mansion of that lady's invalid sister.

(To be continued.)

VAGABOND IMPRESSIONS.

BY ST JOHN LUCAS.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

It was, I think, at the beginning of 1918, when I was serving in Italy, that I saw them. I entered the hall—usually deserted except for a single orderly—of a building that we were occupying, and found myself in their midst. Some of them were nervous, some rather jauntily at ease; a few of them were talking and laughing, but most of them were silent. As I passed them, wondering who they were, a door opened and a bare-legged individual, who was simply clad in a short overcoat, emerged. I realised then what was happening.

Later, I heard details. When the Army Act had been passed, apparently no provision had been made for calling British subjects resident abroad to the colours; but now an edict had gone forth—perhaps somewhat late in the day—that this should be done. It seemed to me hardly worth while: the majority of British residents in Italy, though loyal enough, were elderly, and their children had long ago departed to England to join the Army. A few young men remained, but, with some exceptions, their physical category was low. The medical officer finished his work that evening, and left for other spheres. We promptly forgot him.

I should have continued to forget him, but some time afterwards, when the Germans were making their supreme effort on the Western Front and our age limit for military service had suddenly bounded up to fifty-one, I happened to be looking at a list of all British subjects who were living in a certain district in Italy. It contained several names that I knew, mostly belonging to elderly artists and dilettanti; those who were of military age were distinguished by an asterisk. What remarkable additions to the Army, I thought as I recalled the peaceful aspect of certain sedentary friends, they would make if they were called up! I did not imagine the contingency to be anything but wildly remote, and I was about to put the document aside when my eyes fell on a name that I had revered for nearly a quarter of a century. It was that of no less a person than Mr X., the brilliant essayist who had stolen my heart away when I was a raw schoolboy, with absurd literary leanings and enthusiasms, and had ever since retained it. Mr X. was marked with an asterisk.

For a long time, I think, I

sat staring blankly at that great name. I had known it for so many years—in boyhood, in youth, in crescent middle-age—that I suppose I had come to think of its possessor as venerable in years as well as in genius. He had dawned upon the world like a bright star that rises over some melancholy shore during the Beardsley period, and the Beardsley period seemed now almost as remote as that of the Black Figure Vases. Looking back, I remembered that when his first books appeared, kindly critics had regarded him as a prodigious infant who had abandoned the bottle and taken to the pen somewhat prematurely, and unkind critics had denounced him as a little Panurge who scampered about mischievously in lace collars and in tight velvet breeches which invited the attention of the rod of elders. In those days, certainly, he *was* defiant and pretentious—a pigmy with a heroic strut; but he was immensely clever, and how greatly he had developed, how finely he had mellowed, since then! Even the critics who had attacked him so furiously in his youth had changed their tone: they called him incomparable and inimitable instead of insufferable; they boasted of having made his acquaintance, and invariably alluded to him by his Christian name. How irritating, to me, their vulgar and belated adulation—to me, who for years had watched the gradual development of that delicate unobtrusive talent, and knew every stage in that long, unhurried, unflagging progress towards perfection!

I had never met him. It was better so. But I had often seen him, in theatres, at tedious public dinners when the eminent of England assembled together, as some one wittily remarked, to eat cutlets at eminent foreigners. Often I had watched that frail elegant figure silhouetted against the grotesque and inflated shapes which invariably haunt "literary" and "artistic" drawing-rooms, and noted the impassive yet weary expression of his dark and melancholy eyes. I had heard innumerable stories of his wit, his fastidious horror of all that was blatant and brazen, his dislike of hearty, ramping, bow-wow people. I had observed the unostentatious elegance of his apparel, the sensitive grace of his gestures, the charm of his smile. And I believe that I had read every line that he had written.

And now Mr X. was standing, a frail pathetic figure, on the brink of military service. As he was a writer and, according to military standards, had no special knowledge or capacity, he would probably be hurled into a labour battalion, or at best become the batman of some unsympathetic and hectoring colonel—he, perhaps the only man on earth who was truly a hero to his valet! It was a horrible thought. I checked myself sharply, not daring to face the more mon-

strous vision of Mr X. engaged in throwing bombs, discharging a rifle, or staggering through abysmal mud beneath a heavy pack. Shuddering, I determined that I would do everything in my power to protect him and to find him some employment which should not be too grotesquely incongruous; but how could I, a humble and uninfluential person, really be of any help to him? For all I knew, too, Mr X. might be burning with martial ardour, and firing off rifles in the back-garden of his Italian villa. I did not care. I would save him from himself. In the general welter and waste of that misery of war, one thing that was fine should at any rate be preserved, one man of genius should escape the brutal, undiscriminating machine-gun. My mind was made up. I would take action immediately.

Well! After all, it seems that I need not have worried myself. The Armistice came soon afterwards, and I doubt if any of that pathetic little band which I had found awaiting the doctor had time to qualify for the front line. As far as I know, too, Mr X. was never obliged to put on khaki; if he was, he apparently survived it, for he has published several things lately. His hand has not coarsened; he is still "inimitable" and "incomparable"; the master of the felicitous phrase, the wisest and the wittiest of observers. He will never know the extent of the service that I might have rendered him and, incidentally, humanity. If he *did* know, he would probably damn my impertinence: he may have attempted, as I hinted above, to become a disciple of D'Annunzio or a captain of Bersaglieri. We shall never meet: I could not bear the strain. But—though he will always be unaware of it—I shall always be watching over his destiny. Who, having delighted in the gradual development of that incomp——, that inimit——, that truly great man, could fail to remain his very humble and adoring devotee?

The case of Mr X. made me reflect on the many instances I had known of persons who, though almost ludicrously unmilitary in temperament, had been absorbed into the war-machine, and had reappeared, after months or years of service, surprisingly unchanged. Perhaps it was this very fact—that they did not change; that the vast abominable episode of war seemed powerless to make them lose their grip of all that they thought essential and permanent—it was this that reconciled one to the departure of so many young poets and artists whose life had been so happily careless, and whose future seemed so brightly radiant. At first it was difficult to realise. When I saw Rupert Brooke on his return from Antwerp, in tremendous spirits and full of absurd anecdotes, I could not believe that he was not acting; it seemed to me that even a

comparatively minor experience of the "real thing" must have effected a profound change in such a temperament as his. Afterwards, of course, when the war dominated every one and everything, one saw one's friends in the once incongruous khaki without surprise, whatever one's private feelings were about certain professional cricketers and pugilists, over whom, it was perhaps untruly reported, a special semi-official Providence was watching. Abroad, one met without any particular emotion poets and painters and University dons in wildly inappropriate situations, all doing their more or less unpleasant jobs more or less well, and all preserving their old enthusiasms. One had begun by thinking that the war was a terrific malignant score off civilisation and all in civilisation that poets and artists stood for; one ended by realising that it was the poets and artists who had scored off the war. And when they died they died winners.

Yet though it seems right and natural that the dreamers and scholars of our own time should have played their part in the huge, ugly, unromantic drama, imagination shudders at the thought of the Victorians and pre-Victorians in a similar plight. So, I suppose, will the literary enthusiasts of 1960, if there are any left, contemplate with horror the dreadful might-have-been which threatened Mr X. It is true that nearly all the poets of the nineteenth century were patriots and lovers of liberty: even Byron, though he regretted, or affected to regret, that we won Waterloo, would certainly not have sympathised with Wilhelm II. as he sympathised with Napoleon. Byron, indeed, was of heroic mould; but it is difficult to imagine any of his contemporaries taking a personal part in war. The blue-spectacled Wordsworth in a labour battalion; Keats passed as a combatant by some careless Army doctor; Shelley, a genuine conscientious objector, doing heroic deeds as a stretcher-bearer — each of these ideas seems fantastic, yet who knows what equally fantastic metamorphoses may have happened in the last few years, and who can reckon what we may have lost?

Of course men, and even poets, are the creatures of their own epoch, and it is really unfair to assume that the writers of the nineteenth century would have maintained their attitude towards war and militarism if they had been plunged into the cataclysm of our time. The fact remains, however, that they were nearly all exceedingly peaceful creatures, with a strong sense of the importance of their personal freedom and dignity, and they would probably have suffered agonies as conscripts. The early poets hated the Army. "On the road from Cowes to Newport," says Keats in one of his letters, "I saw some extensive Barracks, which disgusted me extremely with the Government for placing such

a Nest of Debauchery in so beautiful a place."

> "Adieu, ye females fraught with graces!
> Adieu, red coats and redder faces!
> Adieu, the supercilious air
> Of all who strut 'en militaire'!"

says Byron in the "Farewell to Malta." Coleridge, it is true, enlisted at the age of twenty-one in the cavalry, but the experiment was a failure. "On the 2nd December 1793 he enlisted under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbatch in the 15th, or King's Regiment of Light Dragoons. Two days later he was inspected, attested, and sworn at Reading, the headquarters of the regiment. His Majesty's military needs must have been urgent at this time, for Comberbatch was one of the few Englishmen of any degree who could truthfully confess to having had all his life a violent antipathy to soldiers and horses. Of course the dragoonship was a sorry farce. He could not stick on his horse; he could not even clean it or the accoutrements. But he could charm his comrades into taking these latter duties off his hands by writing their love-letters, telling them stories, and nursing them when they were sick." [1]

Coleridge in the ranks was certainly an object for pity, but imagine Herbert Spencer and Jowett, Borrow and Edward FitzGerald at the mercy of a fierce sergeant-major! Matthew Arnold would no doubt have been exempted by the Board of Education, and Tennyson through the intercession of Queen Victoria; Swinburne would probably have rushed off to Italy and tried to join the Bersaglieri, finding, to his great annoyance, that Browning (Ever a fighter; Breast and back as either should be) was already there. Meredith, who in one of his letters expressed a desire to be a conscript, would have borne the hardships of active service philosophically, but would have thoroughly disliked the intellectual isolation. The Royal Academicians, spectacularly led by Lord Leighton, would have been staff officers in the War Office. Morris and the pre-Raphaelites would have had a rude awakening from their dreams. This catalogue may be extended infinitely by any one who cares to take the trouble.

It was an inevitable result of a long period of peace and prosperity that the later Victorians looked on war from a romantic standpoint and wrote rhodomontade concerning it. I remember being profoundly surprised as a boy when I read that a great American general summed up his experience in the succinct declaration that war was hell; and it was not until the South African campaign, with its protracted tragedy of blunders and disease, that I began to realise that the American general was right. There are some good fights in Victorian literature,

[1] James Dykes Campbell, 'Poetical Works of Coleridge.' Macmillan.

but they are fights without machine-guns. It was left to Mr Kipling to introduce that invaluable instrument.

"I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shaft and snapping short of bows;
The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows
Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips
That curl in touching you; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
Leaving all colours in them brown and red
And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,
The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game."

That is a pre-Raphaelite picture of fighting, and it is very far away from Sir Philip Gibbs and Ole Bill, though there is more reality in it than, for instance, in the stagey affair between Sohrab and Rustum. Robert Louis Stevenson contrived some good fights—notably the defence of the round-house in 'Kidnapped'—yet his attitude was too often that of the child cutting down poppy-heads in the garden with a wooden sword, imagining himself the robber chief riding out of the valley at the head of his bold blades in the glare of burning homesteads. He could be wiser. "In that year cannon were roaring for days together on the French battle-fields; and I would sit in my isle . . . and think upon the war and the loudness of these far-away battles, and the pain of men's wounds, and the weariness of their marching." The pain, the filth, and the fatigue are apt to be forgotten by romantic writers in an epoch of peace, and their waving sabres and their trumpets and clouds of glory seem as false to us now as the patriotic ardours of our profiteers during the war. It was not their fault; they could not know; and though they had imaginations, the Great War was unimaginable. The late Victorians were thoroughly peaceful persons, to whom fighting was a pleasantly thrilling spectacle, not a chaos of courage and deadly fear, unutterable tedium, stench, lice, exposure, graft, brutality, injustice, self-sacrifice, and heroic cheerfulness. Only one writer seems to have had no illusions concerning the military life—he has no illusions about anything—and that is Mr George Moore, who was sent when young to an Army crammer.

"The seventeen hundred and fifty-three young men that Messrs Jurles had passed into the Army owed their success to the diligence of his brother and to the solemn Swiss who taught modern languages in the

back room. Out of it he came every hour, a red handkerchief hanging out of his tail-pocket; 'I will trable you now,' and, my chair tilted, I used to watch him, wondering the while what kind of death each one of his pupils would meet on the battle-field, worried by the thought that my lot might be to die in defence of my country, or be wounded in her defence, which was worse still. It seemed to me that myself was my country, but having no alternative to propose to my father I accepted the Army."

Still, in spite of Mr George Moore, we may surmise that the Victorians, if they had been plunged into a world-war, would have pocketed their individualism, just as our young poets of 1914 pocketed theirs, and as Mr X. would have pocketed his, and would have saved the situation. And, as in our time, there would have been some tragi-comic figures amongst the recruits.

WALTER PATER AND THE ARMY.

"Faint, pale, embarrassed, exquisite Pater!" Henry James wrote to Mr Gosse in 1894, "he reminds me, in the disturbed midnight of our actual literature, of one of those lucent match-boxes which you place, on going to bed, near the candle, to show you, in the darkness, where you can strike a light; he shines in the uneasy gloom—vaguely, and has a phosphorescence, not a flame."

Certainly, of all the Victorians, Walter Pater is the last whom one would expect to have written of the military life. That hieratic and cloistered intellect, one imagines, must surely have shrunk, as the leaf of a sensitive plant shrinks at the touch of a rough hand, from the crude realities of war; and though the morbid side of his nature might find a certain fascination in its grimy monstrosity, he had no spark of the peculiar humour which alone makes contemplation of such things tolerable. That he should have drawn the portrait of a young soldier on active service almost makes one think that he did so as a kind of challenge to his own temperament.

Marius the Epicurean, the character on which Pater lavished all the careful resources of his art, is a completely unmilitary figure, fastidious, ascetic, absorbed in the life of the mind, a meditative pilgrim towards Christianity. Yet the hero of Pater's "military" story bears a strong resemblance to Marius: he is ascetic, thoughtful, self-controlled, keenly susceptible to forms and ceremonies, and to the spell of historic and romantic environment. His name is Emerald Uthwart. It is hard to forgive his parents for calling him Emerald, though Pater explains that the name came from an ancestor. His childhood is passed in an old Sussex

country-house, and his boyhood at a school which is obviously Pater's own—the King's School, Canterbury. The latter place is described, or rather suggested, in some of the most beautiful pages that he ever wrote, yet the impression left on the reader is the impression which it seemed to make on Uthwart—that of a cloister remote from the world, where voices were hushed, and there was a faint smell of incense always in the air. Uthwart himself, it must be owned, is rather like a person in a church window; and though one cannot help admiring the art with which Pater has drawn certain aspects of a highly specialised character, and the development of its sense of submissiveness and self-mastery, one feels that if, as a boy, one had met Uthwart, one would (if sufficiently large) have been sorely tempted to fall upon him and beat him. The headmaster, apparently, *did* beat him on one occasion, and, after the painful ceremony was ended, Uthwart remarked, submissively, "And now, sir, that I have taken my punishment, I hope you will forgive my fault." He had, of course, incurred the blame that others merited. Uthwart, in short, like Marius, was, if not a prig, somewhat deficient in humour, though there is a certain irony in his speech to the headmaster. In drawing him, Pater was expressing his own ideal of the young Greek—the Spartan ideal of soldier-like obedience—just as in Marius he gives us a young Roman who acquired his instinct of devotion and reverence from his early association with the patriarchal religion—the religion of Numa. But modern schoolboys are rarely like young Greeks—at any rate, like young Greeks as Pater conceived them to be. Uthwart is a lay-figure stuffed, like Marius, with "sensations and ideas"; stuffed also, by his friend James Stokes the prefect, with "minute points of meaning in Homer, in Vergil." Pater had too coldly fastidious a mind and too little dramatic sense to be able to create people of real flesh and blood.

Uthwart and Stokes both seem destined to become High-Church curates, or Oxford dons of the anti-progressive type. But the spirit of submissiveness, of being an obedient part of an efficient machine, grows upon them; people tell Uthwart that he is made for the Army; and their imaginations are stirred by the "scarlet and white and blue, spruce leather and gold lace," of a neighbouring military garrison—presumably the Buffs. They go to Oxford—a beautiful but immaterial Oxford—but leave the University suddenly, and join the Army on the outbreak of war.

Then they go to Flanders, calling on their way at the old school to show off their uniforms, in which Uthwart is "quite perversely at his ease." They join a famous regiment, serve with distinction, and are both promoted, Uthwart being

wounded. It is characteristic of Pater that he dislikes to imagine them ever becoming dirty: "Peril, good luck, promotion, the grotesque hardships which leave them smart as ever (as if, so others observe, dust and mire wouldn't hold on them, so spick and span they were, more especially on days of any exceptional risk or effort)." They remain cheerful in the most depressing surroundings: "Following, leading, resting sometimes perforce, amid gunshots, putrefying wounds, green corpses, they never lacked good spirits, any more than the birds warbling perennially afresh, as they will, over such gangrened places. . . ." At length they go into trenches under the walls of an old frontier town, and it is there that the catastrophe happens.

In several of the essays which make up the volume entitled 'Imaginary Portraits,' Pater seems to have aimed at achieving a grimly ironical effect by overwhelming his principal character in some unexpected and incongruous tragedy. Sebastian von Storck, the lonely student of abstract philosophy, who becomes more and more detached from actual life, is drowned in a flood; Duke Carl of Rosenmold, a fantastic dilettante, falls victim to an invading army; Denys L'Auxerrois, the reincarnation of Dionysus, is torn to pieces by a mob. In 'Emerald Uthwart' a similar device is employed. Uthwart and Stokes, by some mysterious means, enter the city on their own account and capture a flag. On their return they are put under arrest for "wantonly deserting their posts while in a position of high trust in time of war." The irony lies in the fact that their one breach of submissiveness resulted in a completely successful and heroic exploit, the result of the latter being that Stokes is shot and Uthwart dismissed from the Army with disgrace.

It is here that the somewhat "phosphorescent" story glows into poignant flame. Pater had a strongly morbid imagination, which he usually kept well under control; it breaks out horribly at the end of 'Denys L'Auxerrois'; it breaks out again in 'Emerald Uthwart.' The description of the execution (it is supposed to be taken from the diary of an eye-witness) is extraordinarily grim, and not less so is that of Uthwart's degradation. He witnesses the death of his friend; his sword is broken, and his epaulettes are torn off.

"I shall never forget the expression of this man's countenance (says the eye-witness), though I have seen many sad things in the course of my profession. He had the sort of good looks which always rivet attention, and in most minds friendly interest; and now, amid all his pain and bewilderment, bore a look of humility and submission as he underwent those extraordinary details of his punishment."

Uthwart wanders about wretchedly and at last reaches home, where he dies of his old

wound just when his case has been taken up in the newspapers and he has been offered a new commission.

"On that July afternoon, the gardens, the woods, mounted in flawless sweetness all round him as he stood, to meet the circle of a flawless sky. Not a cloud; not a motion on the grass! At the first he had intended to return home no more; and it had been a proof of his great dejection that he sent at last, as best he could, for money. They knew his fate already by report, and were touched naturally when that had followed on the record of his honours. Had it been possible, they would have set forth at any risk to meet, to seek him; were waiting now for the weary one to come to the gate, ready with their oil and wine, to speak metaphorically, and from this time forth underwent his charm to the utmost—the charm of an exquisite character, felt in some way to be inseparable from his person, his characteristic movements, touched also now with seemingly irreparable sorrow. For his part, drinking in here the last sweets of the sensible world, it was as if he, the lover of roses, had never before been aware of them at all."

It is a pity that the story did not end on this note. It is marred by a postscript, supposed to be written by a doctor who comes after Uthwart's death to extract the bullet from his body, in which Pater's imagination betrays him into an excess of morbid detail. (The doctor performs the operation in the presence of Uthwart's mother.)

"The ball, a small one, much corroded with blood, was at length removed; and I was then directed to wrap it in a partly-printed letter, or other document, and place it in the breast-pocket of a faded and much-worn scarlet soldier's coat, put over the shirt which enveloped the body. The flowers were then hastily replaced, the hands and the peak of the handsome nose remaining visible amongst them; the wind ruffled the fair hair a little; the lips were still red. I shall not forget it. The lid was then placed on the coffin and screwed down in my presence. There was no plate or other inscription upon it."

Pater's touch was uncertain when he was writing realistically; there is a strong flavour of the grotesque in this description of poor Uthwart's corpse, and it is difficult to understand his wish for this peculiar post-mortem.

A strange and painful story, and, on the whole, a failure artistically! But it is certainly a remarkable contribution to our military literature.

Printed by William Blackwood and Sons.